



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

March 2010

Synergistic Partnerships



USFWS Photo by Kurt Svendsgaard,
Tamarac NWR.

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:

USFWS Photo by Kurt Svendsgaard, Tamarac NWR.

Departments

RD's Corner / 3

Around the Region / 19

Features



Synergistic Partnerships / 3

The RD stresses the importance of partnerships.

By Tom Melius



WCEP Partnership / 13

Winter in St. Marks.

By Ashley Spratt



Innovative Partner Program / 15

No Kid Left Indoors, a new program.

By Steve Sutter



President of the Friends of Pool 9 Receives Award/ 9

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge shows appreciation.

By Tim Yager

Synergistic Partnerships

The phrase “working with others” is prominent within our mission statement for a distinct reason. Mutual cooperation is essential to the success of our conservation priorities. Whether we are working with friends groups, state agencies, congressional representatives, tribal representatives, or private land owners, partnerships are invaluable to achieving our conservation mission. History has shown that there is a strong correlation between the committed engagement in synergistic, effective, working relationships with partners who share our vision and the high degree of vitality and sustainability of our natural resources and the environment to date.

Fostering opportunities for collaborative action and communication between agencies with similar goals and objectives is critical. That’s why Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley presented an award last November to Fred Maulson, Chief Warden of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) in recognition of their 25th anniversary of fish and wildlife conservation in the Great Lakes and in appreciation of our long-lasting partnership. GLIFWC’s commitment to the implementation of off-reservation treaty rights on behalf of its tribes is nothing less than commendable (Inside Region 3 – December 2009).

It is an opportunity and a privilege to be able to leverage our resources with other agencies. Organizations like the Midwest Natural Resources

Group (MNRG) help facilitate this important opportunity to connect by creating a forum for senior leaders, technical experts, involved citizens, state and local governments, and non-government organizations (NGOs) to discuss regional natural resource issues (page 11). In partnership with member agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has among other accomplishments, instituted best management practice recommendations for non-native invasive species and created forums to address common agency programmatic issues like the development of a methodical approach for conducting cumulative environmental impact analyses.

The development of our Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC’s) has provided an opportunity and a need to communicate and coordinate with partners throughout our Region. We have hosted dozens of webinars and calls with tribes, states, NGO’s and partners to develop a framework for applied science and shared conservation goals. The LCC’s are, by design, the Service’s headline effort to capitalize on synergistic partnerships.

The Joint Ventures exemplify effective partnerships in bird conservation. As Co-Chair of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture and a Board Member of the Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Region Joint Venture, I have witnessed this effectiveness first-hand. They are made up of Federal, State, and NGO partners concerned about birds and their habitats, working toward the common goal of effective landscape management. The success of Joint

Ventures is well-known, and can serve as a model for the developing Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

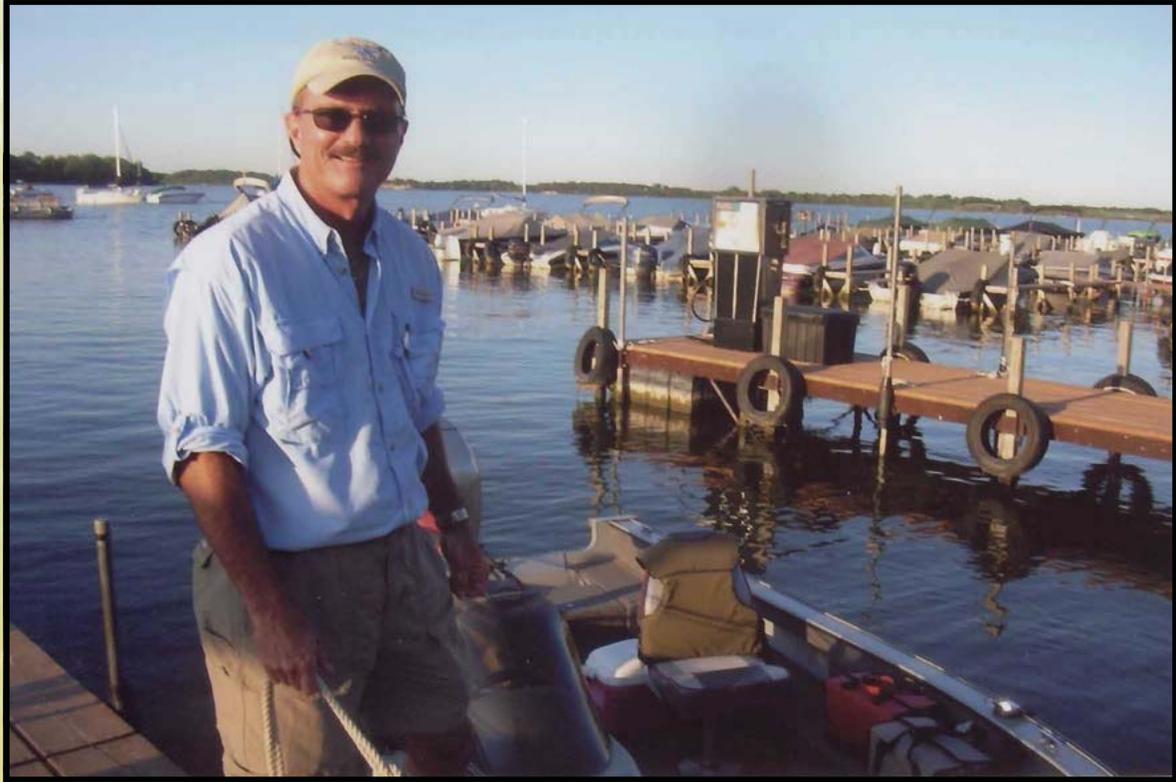
Employing such partnerships across state and federal agencies was again in full display these past two months as we employed our rapid response strategy to the threat of invasive Asian carp reaching our Great Lakes.

Our partnerships also foster a sense of community and responsibility, as evidenced by the Office of Law Enforcement’s (OLE’s) commitment to the holiday season’s silent auction, which raised \$1,121 for Second Harvest Heartland, the largest hunger-relief organization in the Upper Midwest (Inside Region 3 – January 2010). And there was Fisheries’, Michael Hoff’s commitment to the Caring Tree Initiative, which sponsored approximately 100 needy children by providing holiday gifts (Inside Region 3 – January 2010).

The consequences of isolated conservation efforts are enormous and the risks are simply too high. A coordinated, strategic response to the challenges that lay before us, is imperative. Effective stewardship of the environment and our natural resources demands that we work together hand in hand, as does the public trust that we have inherited and worked so hard to uphold, for that is the only way that we can advance our mission and protect and sustain our national treasures for future generations.

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

In Memory Of



Sam D. Hamilton

Service Mourns Loss of Director Sam Hamilton
“Visionary” Leader a Career 30-year Service Employee

February 21, 2010

The conservation world lost one of its most dynamic leaders Saturday, as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Director Sam D. Hamilton died suddenly while skiing in Colorado following a Service regional leadership meeting which ended Friday. Hamilton, 54, was a career Fish and Wildlife Service employee whose vision and commitment to wildlife conservation was unmatched. He will be sorely missed by his friends and colleagues in the Service and across the conservation community. The thoughts and prayers of Fish and Wildlife Service employees go out to Sam’s family.



CELEBRATING HUMBUG MARSH

a wetland of international importance



Humbug Marsh will become Michigan's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Convention).

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty that was adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. The Convention provides a framework

for international action and cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. There are presently 158 contracting parties to the Convention. The United States became a member in 1987.

Contracting parties seek to achieve the Convention's goals by recognizing that wetlands are extremely important for biodiversity and human health,

and by promoting local, regional and national stewardship and cooperation. For more information on Ramsar, see link below:

http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1^7715_4000_0__

CELEBRATE CONSERVATION THROUGH THE ARTS!



The **Junior Duck Stamp** is produced by the **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** to recognize the conservation efforts of young people while supporting environmental and conservation education programs in the United States.

The stamp design is selected from a national art contest administered by the **Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program**. The contest is the culmination of an arts-based educational program, in which students draw, paint or sketch a picture of an eligible North American waterfowl species depicting their newfound knowledge of waterfowl anatomy and habitat. This program provides intense experiences in the observation and study of waterfowl species as it strives to connect kids to nature and conservation through art and science in the belief that students are more likely to conserve and protect that which they love.

Students K-12! Go to www.fws.gov/juniorduck/entrypacket.htm/ for information on entering the contest. **Teachers!** Jumpstart your artists today with the free curriculum available at www.fws.gov/juniorduck/pdf/curriculumguide.pdf/. Another supplement providing fun and important background information on the contest is also available at www.fws.gov/juniorduck/pdf/2003centennialcurriculumguide.pdf/.

Stamps are available at local National Wildlife Refuges, Post Offices (www.usps.com) or the Amplex Corporation (www.duckstamp.com)!

**BUY YOUR JUNIOR DUCK STAMP AND SUPPORT
AMERICA'S NEXT GENERATION OF LAND STEWARDS!**

Partnership to Restore Conifers to Riparian Corridors of Lake Superior's South Shore

The Coastal Program - Great Lakes worked in partnership with the University of Wisconsin and U.S. Geological Survey to initiate testing methods for the riparian corridor restoration on Lake Superior's South Shore. In an effort to re-establish the historic conditions and protect brook trout streams, the project is examining whether native conifers can be restored to riparian corridors in composition and numbers that approximate historic conditions.

This is taking place in a tributary to the Bark River in Bayfield County, Wis. The Bark River flows into Lake Superior and is identified as an important watershed for native brook trout in the Wisconsin Lake Superior Basin Brook Trout Plan.

This watershed and many others on the Bayfield Peninsula were once forested with cedar, hemlock and white pine. The dense crowns of mature conifer stands helped

moderate high water levels and flash flows, making the streams ideal spawning grounds for brook trout and other cold water fish species.

The original extensive logging and slash fires eliminated most conifers. High deer populations likely suppressed regeneration of the trees.

In May of 2007 three species of conifers were planted; hemlock, white pine, and white spruce. Three-year old seedling stock obtained from Wisconsin DNR nurseries were planted at a stem density of approximately 2,500 per hectare. Eighty percent of the planted trees were spruce with the remaining 20% evenly divided amongst the hemlock and white pine. After planting the trees were sprayed with Plantskydd®, a blood-based repellent, and then sprayed again in May of 2008 to reduce mortality from deer browsing while the seedlings were becoming established. During the 2008 repellent application, it was estimated that at least 80% of the spruce, 25% of the white pine, and 10% of the hemlock had survived. Because of a severe draught the summer of planting, the survival rate was good.

Flow and sediment measuring devices were installed above and below the confluence of the ravine where the trees were planted and the active stream channel, and are currently recording stream flow at 15-minute intervals. These values have been compared to values collected from an adjacent control ravine and one in which engineered flow-reduction devices have been installed.

In the long term, the planted

conifers should provide the benefit of canopy development and closure, including the ability to hold snow off the ground and moderate summertime stream temperatures through shading. They will also add coarse woody debris to streams, which increases structural diversity and benefits brook trout and other fish by creating cover, pools, and gravel beds for spawning, and re-establish more conifer seed sources in the ravines.

In coming years, additional work at the site will take place to release the planted trees and to continue to assess their rate of survival. Bayfield county forestry and DNR Fisheries are both interested in cooperating on the release work and continuing monitoring. Monitoring stream flows will continue to take place as the conifers grow and become part of the forest canopy.

Short term results of this project are encouraging and the long term results will provide a useful assessment of the planting and engineering approaches to spawning stream enhancement, as well as the efficacy of deer repellent as a long term means to reduce seedling mortality. They will also provide a basis for feasibility and recommended approaches in other locations that can be used by foresters and fishery managers, and others interested in both forest and stream restoration. Results of this work will add to the growing knowledge base which works to benefit Lake Superior basin brook trout and other fish populations.

-- Ted Koehler, R3-Ashland FRO



Mike Mlynarek of USFWS and Eric Danotnian of USGS Check a Sediment Monitoring Station on the Conifer Restoration Project in Bayfield County Wisconsin. USFWS photo by Ted Koehler.

Iowa Partnership Shines for an Endangered Fish

In just a decade, the future of the endangered Topeka shiner in Iowa has changed from a question mark to an exclamation point. The Topeka shiner was once found in many streams and rivers throughout Iowa, but by the time the species was listed in 1998, the tiny fish was restricted to a handful of locations, mainly in the North Raccoon River and its tributaries. The Boone, Rock and Little rivers support smaller populations. Loss or degradation of the shiner's habitat – prairie streams and associated oxbows – caused the species to decline by about 90 percent in Iowa and other parts of its range prior to listing.

Not long after the Topeka shiner gained Endangered Species Act protection, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service's) Rock Island Field Office and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation began a partnership with private landowners that would set the stage for recovery in Iowa. In 2000 the partnership began implementing habitat restoration projects for the Topeka shiner, focusing on restoring "off-channel" oxbows and educating riparian landowners along the tributaries of the North Raccoon River in Greene, Calhoun and Sac counties. From 2001 to 2009, the partners – which also included Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Iowa DNR and The Nature Conservancy – restored 20 oxbows along three major tributaries.

The restoration technique was fairly simple – excavate post settlement alluvium (i.e. silt) out of the oxbow to uncover the



Above: Kraig McPeck (left) with Iowa landowners Mike and Jean Moeller at a Topeka shiner habitat restoration site. USFWS photo.

native gravel/cobble substrate and lower adjacent stream banks to naturalize the flood frequency of these habitats. This creates excellent spawning and rearing habitat while also providing summer and winter refugia during drought or severe winter conditions.

Managers couldn't have asked for better results. When each of these 20 projects began, none supported aquatic organisms; they would completely dry up shortly after spring high water and act as biological sinks, making them unfit not only for Topeka shiners but for any aquatic life. Following excavation and restoration, all sites have viable populations fish and other aquatic life. And they are proving to be a haven for Topeka shiners. During sampling in spring of 2009, nine out of 10 oxbows supported at least one Topeka shiner; one site yielded 354.

A crucial factor in the success of the partnership is providing

incentives to landowners; about \$7,500 is needed to conduct each restoration. The Service provides 75 percent of the cost through the Landowner Incentive Program grants to states. The remainder of the tab is picked up by NRCS through its EQIP program. Restorations are carried out on private agricultural land, so footing the bill for landowners' participation is key to the effort.

As Aldo Leopold said "Conservation means harmony between men and land. When land does well by its owner, and the owner does well by his land; when both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation. When one or the other grows poorer, we do not" Kraig McPeck, the Private Lands biologist in Rock Island who spearheaded the Service's participation in the partnership, says the Topeka shiner is the poster child for fish species that



Above: One of 20 oxbows restored in Iowa as habitat for the endangered Topeka shiner. USFWS photo.

Continued on back page.

Citizen Partnership President of the Friends of Pool 9 Receives Award

President of the Friends of Pool 9 Receives Award from Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

John Verdon of Lansing, Iowa recently received the River Guardian Award from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Verdon was recognized for his years of dedicated service with the Friends of Pool 9, a citizen group which promotes public awareness and support for the refuge and its mission.

Verdon has lead the Friends of Pool 9, serving as its president, since its inception in 2006. He has been instrumental in building a productive citizen partnership with the Refuge which has fostered increased communication with refuge staff and increased participation in projects which contribute to the mission of the Refuge.

Tim Yager, District Manager of the McGregor District, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge reflected on Verdon's contributions, "John is someone you can always count on to assist the refuge with completing projects. No matter what the event, he is always there helping organize volunteers for river cleanups, wildlife surveys, and environmental education programs such as River Education Days and the Mississippi River Adventure Days. John is a very humble individual, and attributes



Above: Kevin Foerster (L), Refuge Manager of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish, Refuge presents John Verdon (R) of Lansing, Iowa with the River Guardian Award.

his personal success to the committed members of the Friends of Pool 9. He is a great leader and very deserving of this recognition."

Under his leadership the Friends of Pool 9 have been recognized by the Governor of Iowa as the Volunteer Group of the Year. The group also received the 2007 Honor Roll Award from the Izaak Walton League of America, and most recently was recognized as the 2009 Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The River Guardian Award recognizes citizens who have demonstrated outstanding actions in the service to people and/or the resources of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

--Tim Yager

Refuge Week 2010

October 10-16

Promotional materials have not yet been developed, but we would love to hear from you about what is useful. We may not be able to provide it all, but we certainly will give your suggestions serious attention.

Give your ideas to Martha Nudel, chief, Branch of Communications, 703-358-1858 or Martha_Nudel@fws.gov.

Minnesota Valley NWR Interview

Partner School Program

External Affairs caught up with Minnesota Valley's Beth Ullenberg. In a brief interview, she discussed the partner program at the refuge.

Redmond: When I came in, I had another interview scheduled. I saw these kids and they were so adorable. I took some photos of them and did some film footage of them. I understand they were with the partners school program. Can you tell me about that?

Ullenberg: Yeah, you bet. Those students particularly were with a partner teacher, which is a teacher that has come in and taken a training workshop with our staff to learn how to use the facility, use our classroom, use our equipment, use our curriculum and our materials. So they can bring their students out on a self-led program, and enjoy the refuge and have an outdoor experience.

Redmond: That's fabulous. Now, what schools are you working with?

Below: Minnesota Valley's Beth Ullenberg explains the refuge programs to former St. Paul Winter Carnival's Queen of the Snows. USFWS photo by George Lewis.



Ullenberg: We're working, actually with a variety of schools. We're really focusing on inner city youth. Inner city schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul. But really, any teacher can come out and take the training, sign up for the program and bring their kids to the refuge.

Redmond: And how would they find out about this program? How would they sign up?

Ullenberg: They can contact the refuge. We have a website that they can go to or they can call the information desk and get forwarded to one of the rangers.

Redmond: And do you want to state the website for our listening audience?

Ullenberg: Yeah. The website is: www.fws.gov/minnesota-valley. And it's all one word, MinnesotaValley.

Redmond: Another question, it's more like a personal question, but are you open this weekend? I was thinking of bringing my kids out for the snow shoeing.

Ullenberg: Well, the refuge lands are open daily in daylight hours every day of the year. This building itself, the visitor center during the winter—we have winter hours and summer hours—during the winter we're open Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and we're also open the first full weekend of each month. And that is through November through March.

Redmond: Any last words?



Above: Kids from World Cultures Magnet School enjoy nature lessons at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. USFWS photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Ullenberg: Well, just that we really want people to come out and enjoy the refuge. And they don't necessarily have to come the visitor's center here. There's trails and all kinds of things going on out on the refuge, lots of good wildlife observation, and hiking opportunities, just a great chance to get outdoors.

Redmond: OK, thank you very much Beth. It was nice to see you.
Ullenberg: Thank you.

MNRG Serves as a Federal Agency Partnership for Executives

Since its inception in 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been an active member of the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG). The MNRG acts as a forum for federal agency senior executives to proactively coordinate federal activities that support the health, vitality, and sustainable stewardship of natural resource systems within the Midwest.

The organizational goal of the MNRG is to function as a partnership of Federal agency executives that advocate excellence in federal activities in support of the health, vitality, and sustainable stewardship of natural resource systems within the Midwest, including the Upper Mississippi River, Missouri River, Ohio River and Great Lakes watersheds.

The MNRG aims to achieve this overarching goal through enhanced communications, coordination and collaboration on mutually recognized resource issues and by providing timely interagency assistance where needed for the benefit of the American public. Member agencies include: FAA, NPS, EPA, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, USGS, U.S. Coast Guard, NRCS, BIA, FERC, FEMA, FHWA, and the Service. Member agencies are represented by an appropriate regional executive and one to two supporting staff members. The Midwest Regional Director and intergovernmental affairs liaison represent the Service on the MNRG.

In addition to regular informal correspondence, the MNRG

convenes twice annually for multi-day meetings intended to discuss natural resource topics of shared interest in the Midwest (e.g., climate change impacts, watershed health, sustainable natural resource conservation). These meetings provide an opportunity for agency principals and staff to share information and collaborate on new initiatives such as the Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

MNRG principals recently signed an action letter stating that the Mississippi River, the world's third largest river, is a resource of national significance that demands an integrated approach to resource management and an inter-generational commitment.

The group is supporting a summer 2010 summit organized by the Army Corps to convene basin stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. This gathering is intended to spur the development of a holistic vision and comprehensive strategy that will protect and enhance the basin's substantial ecological, economic, recreational and cultural values.

--Ryan Aylesworth
External Affairs



Above: In May and November, 2009, the Service participated in semi-annual meetings of the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG) that focused on ways the member agencies could promote the development of a comprehensive strategy for protecting natural resources in the Mississippi River Basin. As part of our continued engagement with this group, the Service will be assisting in the drafting of an executive order designed to facilitate the development of a collective vision for conservation the basin.

Maintenance Action Team Lauded for Storm Restoration Work

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Maintenance Action Team (MAT) is commended for the completion of its restoration and repairs to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge (NWFR) in Winona, Minn., and Garvin Brook in Minnesota City, Minn. The projects reshaped, stabilized and seeded the Garvin Brook shoreline that was pummeled with torrential rainstorms in the summer of 2007.

In its wake, the storm deposited tons of trash, debris and silt on the refuge. Dead timber, uprooted trunks and branches took up residence at river turns. High water levels and mud led to the overflow of tributaries and pools inflicting damage upon wildlife habitat and real property assets. The total estimated damage from the disaster was \$2,159,918. "The flood left this place pretty nasty," said Mike Madel, maintenance mechanic and MAT team member.

MAT crews moved the downed trees left by the flood to the sandbars and incinerated stacks of tree trunks and debris from the storm. The storm damage recovery plan was to repair and



Above Left: Garvin Brook shoreline after the storm. Right: MAT team restores the landscape. USFWS Photos.

build a more flood resistant infrastructure. Rehabilitation efforts completed stream bank restoration and stabilization and debris removal, and was completed in two weeks.

Members of the MAT included Dale Pittman (Heavy Equipment Coordinator c/o Illinois River NW&FR), Clint DeMenge (Rice Lake NWR), Steve Erickson (Winona District of the Upper Mississippi NW&FR), Mike Madel (Horicon NWR), Tom Marcouiller

(St. Croix WMD), Phil Colsch (Upper Mississippi NWFR-McGregor District).

They are all amazing individuals who do great work and take pride in what they do," said Mary Stefanski, Winona District Manager at the Upper Mississippi River NWFR.

"The finishing touches of another excellent effort by our Maintenance Action Teams," said Rob Miller, PE, Manager of the Division of Facilities Management & Budget Development.

-- Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Winter in St. Marks WCEP Partnership

More than forty endangered species biologists, crane experts, and scientists convened February 8-10 for the ninth annual Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) Winter Meeting in Wakulla County, Fla. They came to review the progress of the eastern migratory population of whooping cranes, and see the 2009 cohorts, which arrived at St. Marks and Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) on Florida's Gulf Coast less than one month ago.

Brooke Pennypacker, Operation Migration pilot, flew one of the four ultralights that led the cranes on their 89-day migration to their wintering grounds in Florida. Brooke equipped me with rain boots and led me through patches of muddy forest to get to the pen

site at St. Marks, where 10 of the 20 whooping cranes are spending the winter. Brooke joked, "This is where they filmed Jurassic Park."

As we approached the blind, I saw the familiar structure that I had seen last year while visiting the other pen site at the Chassahowitzka NWR. Since 2008, the flock has been separated to winter in two separate Refuges along Florida's Gulf Coast.



Above: Inside the blind. USFWS Photo by Ashley Spratt.

Below: Brooke Pennypacker enters the blind at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The blind is used by the winter monitoring team to keep an eye on the birds. USFWS Photo by Ashley Spratt.



At Chass, the pen site is only accessible by airboat. Here at St. Marks, the pen site is just a short ATV ride, but remains closed to public access to ensure safety of the cranes. The Florida panhandle has had unseasonably heavy rainfall this winter, which made the journey to the pen site a muddy mess.

Once we arrived at the blinds, we lowered our voices. Although the blind is out of ear shot from the pen, we don't want to risk startling the birds should they fly out near the blind.

The birds are kept inside a top-netted pen for the first 6-8 days after arrival at their wintering destination. After undergoing health checks and getting accustomed to their surroundings, the top-netted pen is removed, and the birds are able to fly freely in and out of a larger pen a few acres in size.

Winter in St. Marks WCEP Partnership

Just minutes after we picked up the binoculars and peered through the camouflage netting that covered the opening in the blind, a single bird flew outside of the pen, to be followed by the remaining nine birds. They flew in unison directly toward us, and then circled back to land just a few feet from their departure spot.

A curious raccoon crept toward the crowd of cranes then scurried away as one of the birds returned the raccoon's curious advance. As I watched the interactions of the birds, their movement

and mannerisms, I realized how quickly hours could pass without so much as a single check of the clock. St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is a serene setting, and the birds provide continuous entertainment.

The birds are now around eight months of age. They were hatched in March and April of 2009. Their initial training as part of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership project was at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, where they were first introduced to the ultralight aircraft



Photo by Cliff Nieuwenhuis taken at the International Crane Foundation Whooping Crane Wetland Exhibit in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Whooping Cranes are the tallest North American bird standing at 5 feet tall with a 7 to 8 foot wingspan. Males average 16 pounds and females 14 pounds. The Whooping Crane's name was inspired by its loud, distinctive call, audible up to two miles away.

and began flight conditioning. After several weeks of initial training, the birds were then shipped by corporate jet (from a very generous sponsor), to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in central Wisconsin to spend the summer months training for short flights around the refuge with the ultralights, to prepare for the fall migration.

A second whooping crane re-introduction method is ongoing at Necedah NWR. In its third year, the Direct Autumn Release (DAR) program, headed up by staff at the International Crane Foundation (ICF), was developed to allow whooping crane chicks opportunity to bond with older cranes and subsequently join the fall and spring migrations with those birds, instead of following the ultralight aircraft along the migration route.

Nine DAR birds were released this year, and all continue to associate with older whooping cranes. The latest information indicates the birds migrated south to locations including Kentucky, Indiana and Florida.

A challenge facing the Eastern Migratory Population reintroduction project has been unsuccessful nesting during the spring months in central Wisconsin. Although whooping



Above: Overlooking St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Gulf Coast. USFWS Photo by Ashley Spratt.

crane pairs have successfully produced eggs, only a single chick has been successfully hatched in the wild since the program began in 2001.

The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership is working to address this challenge through scientific evaluation of nesting sites, examination of possible limiting factors to nesting, and other potential contributors to nesting failure.

As of February 2010, there are 105 birds in the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes. Through the success of both the ultralight conditioning and the Direct Autumn release programs, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership has successfully created and expanded the number of whooping cranes migrating without assistance, and living in the wild. The task now is to ensure that this population can one day be self-sustaining. For more information about the members of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership and its mission, visit bringbackthecranes.org.

--Ashley Spratt, *External Affairs*

Innovative New Partners Project: No Kids Left Indoors

When you were a kid, did you spend time outdoors playing and imagining yourself as a cowboy, soldier, or explorer? I recall my Mom telling me and my 3 brothers “The sun is up, go play on the glacier until I call you in to eat!” Today many kids don’t go outdoors—they go “out “to the mall. A fourth grader from San Diego is quoted as saying “I like to play indoors better because that is where all the electrical outlets are.” Do you think kids will remember their best day ever as one where they were watching television or playing a video game?

Members of the Richfield Optimists had a vision: Suppose we could help some of America’s children have enjoyable and meaningful experiences

in the out-of-doors, improve their health and well-being, and develop life-long connections with the natural world. It sounded like a good idea and they got to work on it. On April 10, 2010 the Richfield Optimist Club will host the first annual No Kids Left Indoors Walleye Dinner and Auctions. Profits will be divided between three partnerships which help bring out the best in kids—the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife

Refuge Blue Goose Bus Fund, Fraser School, and the Richfield Optimist Club Youth Foundation Scholarship Fund.

In *Last Child in the Woods—Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, author Richard Louv shows that children today are not spending as much time outside as previous generations. This reduced time outdoors has led to negative implications for children’s mental, physical, and emotional

health, and for their success in school. It has also led to implications reducing their desire to protect the environment. Louv refers to this problem as “nature-deficit disorder.”

Louv’s book sparked an international social movement to reconnect

children with nature. Stakeholders in this movement include parents, educators, health care providers, conservationists, outdoor recreation companies, land developers, and more. This movement provides parents and communities with a compelling reason to conserve natural resources and provide outdoor experiences. New evidence shows that conservation is more than just the “right thing to do”—it is



Above Top: Partner school students fresh off the bus, funded by the Blue Goose Bus Fund. Above Bottom: Steve Sutter surrounded by partner school students, gives casting instructions. USFWS photos by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Innovative New Partners Project: No Kids Left Indoors

necessary for healthy childhood development and learning.

For almost ten years, the Richfield Optimist Club has partnered with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to help connect children with nature through such events as the annual Take A Kid Fishing Day and recently the Blue Goose Bus Fund which provides transportation assistance to partner schools that bring students to use and enjoy the outdoor classrooms of the refuge. Today's children are the decision makers of the future. By focusing on connecting children and their families with nature, we are helping to ensure that future citizens support conservation efforts. Additionally, many efforts to connect children with nature will by extension also connect parents, grandparents, and other family members.

In *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv gives anecdotal and research-

based examples of activities that successfully help children connect with nature when they get outside on a regular, sustained basis to discover and explore. Connections are made when children's exposure is experiential, using as many senses as possible. Activities that promote self-guided learning and exploration, rather than highly structured activities, may help children make stronger connections to nature. Connecting with nature may not involve conveyance of facts or environmental concepts, but it is the foundation for future learning and respect for nature.

These experiences can occur outside anywhere that nature is found—not just on refuges or parks, but also in “nearby nature” such as school yards, urban parks, backyards and vacant woodlots. In a vacant lot off their parking lot is where one of our partners Fraser School will develop a preschool

nature lab with its third of the profits from our No Kids Left Indoors (NKLI) effort.

Connecting a child to nature does not require extensive special training or experience as an educator but the Blue Goose Bus Fund does provide teacher workshops to acquaint partner teachers with the refuge and how to use it as a classroom. In addition, the new Richfield Optimist Youth Foundation will award scholarships to college students enrolled in nature- and environmental-related fields of study

Nature connections can be developed in many ways and can be an important element of many school, refuge, and Optimist programs. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, camping, nature photography, hiking, environmental education, stream sampling, building a fort, and simply playing outdoors are just a few of the ways that children and families can connect with nature.

Attendees can purchase tickets on-line now for the Saturday April 10, 2010 gala No Kids Left Indoors dinner. Delicious walleye from Refuge partners the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe will be served at the MSP Airport Hilton Hotel located right where you'd expect to find it—across the street from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge visitor center and a block away from the site of the August Convention. Well-known Brainerd-area guide “Walleye Dan” Eiden is our guest host and radio personality John Hines will be our auctioneer for items such as a guided van tour of bald eagle



Above: Steve Sutter takes a breather with a partner school student. USFWS photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

National Refuge Friends Exchange Program Developed in Region 3

While attending the 2009 National Wildlife Refuge System "Friends Unite!" Conference, co-hosted by NWR and the FWS, was held February 21 - 23, 2009, Mississippi River Wild Friends group member Barb Hammes realized others shared an interest in visiting other Friends at their refuges. Through a Wildlife Refuge Friends grant, the Friends Exchange Program became a reality that allows Friends to host and visit other Friends to share refuge experiences. Based on other successful international exchange programs, this Friends Exchange is a way to keep expenses down while getting to know other Friends and Refuges.

In December Hammes, board member of Friends of Upper Mississippi River Refuge piloted an exchange with Lisa Östberg, president of the Friends of Florida Panther Refuge. They connected through the Exchange Forum at www.mississippiriverwild.com. Östberg was an enthusiastic, skilled and generous tour guide

pointing out flora and fauna while maneuvering a specialized swamp buggy through the Florida Panther Refuge. They even caught a close up video image of a panther when checking one of the refuge cams. Hammes met a retired couple who volunteered at the Florida Panther Refuge while parking their RV there during the winter months. Both Friends learned much from sharing the strengths and challenges facing both refuges. Although Östberg offered housing for this exchange, Hammes already had made vacation rental plans for her family elsewhere. To show appreciation Hammes made a donation to Östberg's Friends group and hopes that Östberg will visit her at the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge someday.

If you are interested in learning more, visiting and hosting other Friends and Refuges, please sign up at the Friends Exchange Forum at WWW.mississippiriverwild.com. If you are a guest at a refuge, it is expected that you offer to host a

Friend in some way sometime. On the Exchange website you are able to state the extent you are able to host, from offering a meal, tour and/or housing. You are able to connect with Friends who are willing to host you as well. After your Friends Exchange, please submit a brief description of your experience to share on the website.
--Barb Hammes, Mississippi River Wild Refuge Support Group

No Kid Left Inside Continued.

On the Refuge with barbecue from Famous Dave's. Members will assist with the Silent Auction some of which are packages encouraging activities to introduce kids to outdoor activities such as bird watching, building a custom fishing rod, or a day of nature photography on a trail.

This is an outside the box fund raiser for the club and they would like to invite you along on the experience. The NKLI committee is still soliciting sponsors and auction item contributors. Please RSVP by April 1. Many thanks for your time, attention and helping us bring out the best in kids.

Special thanks to USFWS Conserving the Nature of America FY2010, Steve Sutter, MVNWR volunteer; Richfield Optimist, Refuge Friends Inc President. 952-858-0737. For more information visit: www.NoKidsLeftIndoors.com, www.RefugeFriendsInc.org or www.fws.gov/letsgetoutside.

--Steve Sutter, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer



Employee Profile

Mark Rarey, Rare Distinction

Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Refuge & Ohio Private Lands Office Administrative Support Assistant, Mark Rarey's extensive background and impressive military career is a rarity in his field.

The Columbus, Ind. native and retired Air Force veteran whose military service began in 1981 when he joined the Indiana Army National Guard, has served our country with distinction, honor and bravery. It is with grateful hearts that we honor his service record.

In June of 1984, Rarey entered active duty with the U.S. Air Force and attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. From there, he went to Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi where he attended the Unit Administration program, graduating top of his class.

After technical school, he was sent to Germany and stationed at the 615 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron in Boerfink. From there he moved to Hahn Air Base and worked for the 50 Munition Maintenance Squadron. In 1988, he was transferred to the

Pentagon where he worked a variety of administrative support jobs including working for the Assistant Secretary for Acquisition as an executive administrative assistant.

He left the Pentagon in 1994 for a one year tour in Korea where he

worked for the 303 Intelligence Squadron commonly referred to as Skivvy Nine. After his tour in Korea, he was assigned to Wright Patterson Air Force Base where he spent the last nine years of his career. He worked for the Air Force Distance Learning office where he provided satellite training to all downlinks for the Air Force and other organizations. During his time at Wright Patterson, he was deployed to Naples, Italy in support of the Kosovo Campaign.

After serving with such distinction, Rarey's service ethic naturally evolved into another form of service when he joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 2004.

"When I decided to retire from the Air Force, I began searching for jobs in Indiana and happened to look on USA Jobs to find the position of administrative support assistant at Muscatatuck NWR," he says. "The rest is history!"

Rarey says that it was his love of the outdoors that attracted him to the Service. "My hobbies are fishing and golf," he says. "I am still an amateur but hope to improve my game."

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Above: Mark Rarey in rare form. USFWS photo.

Around the Region

Steve Sutter: Partner and Friend

EA's caught up with friend and U.S. Fish and Wildlife partner, Steve Sutter.

Redmond: I'm here with Steve Sutter from the [Minnesota Valley] Refuge friends. Steve you were talking a little bit about the Blue Goose Bus Fund. Could you tell our audience about what that is.

Sutter: In today's economy, schools don't have as much money as they used to have to have field trips to bring the kids out the refuge so that they can experience nature. So the Blue Goose Bus Fund is a pile of money that we're trying to generate that would allow some scholarships for schools to provide some busing transportation costs to bring a classroom out to the refuge and then use the refuge classrooms of the refuge so kids can learn about nature in nature.

And we're real fortunate that during the past several months that the Minnesota Valley trust has been doing a double match for the dollars that we've earned. So we have contributions so far over \$25,000. And the Minnesota Valley trust has double matched that. So for our \$25,000, they've put in \$50,000. So that \$75,000 fund that we're trying to spread out over several years to provide transportation funds available for local schools.

Redmond: That's fabulous. That's fabulous. Now you and I worked

together with the Inner City Fishing Day last year. Now you're planning to do that again, right?

Sutter: Yes, absolutely.

Redmond: Have you set a date?



Above: Secretary Salazar(L) and Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius(R) present Steve Sutter(C) with a well deserved award. USFWS photo.

Sutter: It's going to be the first weekend in June. I'm not positive of the day number. I don't remember what that is. We'll have another meeting in about two weeks to start finalizing some of the details. We look forward to that for about two years in advance.

Redmond: Last year it was fabulous.

Sutter: That's always a great time to get a couple hundred kids out there. And many of them, it's the first time catching a fish. And wow, it's just so awesome. I'm glad that you were there last year. I hope you're planning to be there this year.

Redmond: Oh definitely. Most definitely.

Sutter: Good.

Redmond: Well, thank you so much Steve for stopping by.

Sutter: Oh...good to see ya.

Redmond: And good luck to you.

Sutter: Thank you, very much.

A Word From Steve Sutter

My name is Steve. I'm a volunteer for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, as well as, a member of the Richfield Optimists Club, and the Refuge Friends. Three hats I wear I guess because I love to take kids fishing. And the events been going on 13-15 years. I'm not sure. I just came in the middle. I've been working on it since 2000. It's great to see the kids that are out here fishing, learning about the concept of keeping the outdoors nice by not littering, as well as appreciating the species that are out here. Just the quiet and the wonderful places that we have here at the refuge. I set this casting station up for several years. I also worked with Gander Mountain for a while. So there's another hat I wear. And it's been really fun to see it evolve, I guess. Every year it's different. The kids that come may be the same kids that were here last year, but they bring new skills and new enthusiasm. It's just a great thing to be able to do this and see cars zooming by on the freeway and still have the peace and quiet of being out in the wilderness like this is just wonderful. It restores my soul.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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

March 2010

On Partnering in the Asian Carp Emergency

“The multi-layer Asian carp defense strategy for the Great Lakes is part of a multi-agency effort—an effort that has shown great collaboration among all of our partners. and in fact, the collaboration has been seamless and text book, in terms of how we respond to a fish and wildlife emergency such as the Asian carp. The partnership between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Illinois DNR goes back decades and has been a great example of how we are working together to restore fish and restore wildlife in our state of Illinois. And we are very pleased to have them working with us, along with many of the other agencies involved in the Asian carp effort.”

--*Marc Miller*
Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Above: One of 20 oxbows restored in Iowa as habitat for the endangered Topeka shiner. USFWS photo.

Iowa Topeka Shiner Continued from page 8.

rely on in-tact stream corridors and riparian habitat. “If we lose the battle for the Topeka shiner, we may be losing a much larger battle for the species that are connected to it through aquatic relationships throughout the landscape,” said McPeck. “If you pull that cog out of the wheel, what are the next species to go, and the next? Eventually, the whole system fails.” Kraig has recently taken a new position as the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Coordinator for the state of Ohio. Although he’s no longer directly involved in the partnership, he’s confident there’s plenty of momentum to continue to move the Topeka shiner toward recovery. Kraig says he expects to see the partnership restore dozens of new oxbow habitats in Iowa’s Raccoon River basin, and hopes the Topeka shiner partnership will inspire others of its kind throughout the region.

-- *Georgia Parham*
External Affairs

BeWISE 2010 Conference

Recurring Theme:
“Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet”
Thursday, March 11
and
Friday, March 12, 2010
United States Environmental
Protection Agency (EPA) Region
5 Office

Thank you for entering your journal reports and photographs in the Fish and Wildlife Journal (aka. ARS)
<http://ars.fws.gov>.