



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

June 2010

GONE FISHIN'



***June is Connecting
People with Nature Month***

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.

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June is Connecting People with Nature Month

Warm weather goes hand in hand with increased interest in outdoor recreational activities. This time of year presents a great opportunity to highlight the vast natural resources that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages and conserves. Camping, fishing, boating, hiking and birding are just a few of the ways in which we engage surrounding communities on refuge and fish hatchery grounds. Our refuge lands, ponds and rivers offer the public ideal settings for treasured and meaningful personal experiences in the wild. I applaud events such as Kid's Fish Day that took place on May 14 at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the seventh annual River Education Days at Trempealeau NWR where more than 1,000 fifth graders connected with nature. Simple outdoor experiences give children the opportunity to connect to nature in a fun and interesting way, while in tandem keeping the critical component of education central to the mission. I invite you to view my latest video cast that highlights the exciting Trempealeau event.

Recognition of events like this is critical to the mission of the Service. It is the duty of the Service family to "ensure the future of natural resources conservation by connecting people with nature." For this reason, at the request of the

Connecting People with Nature Midwest Region Ambassadors, I am proclaiming June to be "Connecting People with Nature Month" in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region.

The beginning of summer is also a great time to highlight the wonderful aquatic work that we are doing. We are making great strides in the region. The Jordan River National Fish Hatchery in Elmira, Mich., broke ground on May 14 to mark the beginning of hatchery improvement projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In addition, more than 400 school children, educators, community members and congressional staffers explored the new Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Michigan on April 9 during a ribbon cutting and open house event celebrating the completion of its new energy-efficient, LEEDS certified facility (page 9). The visitor center at Neosho National Fish Hatchery is really coming along, the onion and pyramid domes have already been positioned and interior painting is nearly completed. This is an example of a cooperative effort that brings the public and FWS together for a common purpose. In addition, we have several National Fish Habitat Action Plans being implemented in the region. These locally-driven efforts build private and public partnerships to improve fish habitat.

Another exciting activity is the inaugural edition of the Service's Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management. This



peer-reviewed scientific journal is intended to provide a venue for Service biologists who want to publish their work, document observations and survey results, publish research findings, or even editorialize on a conservation issue. The JFWM is free and there are no page charges for authors. As a member of the Service's executive oversight committee for science, I encourage you to dust off those old data sets, or draft that manuscript you've wanted to write and submit your work to the JFWM.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention how pleased I am about the Assistant Director's announcement of the very first Service honor guard team. Three individuals from the region were selected: Dan Shamhart of Illinois River National Wildlife and Fishery Refuge, Samantha Fleming of Crab Orchard NWR and Wesley Verrill of Big Muddy NWR (page 10).

I take this time to thank you for your work. I am very proud of all of your efforts.

Warm Regards,

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



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, one of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conservation principles and priorities states that our Service family "ensures the future of natural resources conservation by connecting people with nature"; and

WHEREAS, June marks the beginning of the summer season for people across America; and

WHEREAS, Americans have more time during the summer season to venture outdoors for discovery and enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, many Service field stations across the Midwest region host or participate in annual events to connect people with their natural settings; and

WHEREAS, the Region 3 Connecting People with Nature Ambassadors believe that our Region will provide opportunities to celebrate our Region's commitment to this effort now and in the future by beginning this summer with "Connecting People with Nature Month".

NOW, THEREFORE, I, THOMAS O. MELIUS, Regional Director, Midwest Region, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, do hereby proclaim the month of June 2010 as

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE MONTH

I call upon every employee of Region 3 to observe this month with appropriate programs, activities, and events supporting the Service's mission as follows: "To conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 1st of June 2010.

Thomas O. Melius, Regional Director
Midwest Region, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Show and Tell Invertebrates - A Middle School Hit!

After traveling among classrooms to hear invited speakers give Environmental Day presentations on the morning of April 20 at Sparta Middle School, a sixth-grade student on the way to lunch gave a review of my speech, stating out-loud that of all the days' special events, "That was the coolest one of all ... he had live fish and insects to touch!"



Above: Students gather samples of aquatic vegetation to search for a variety of invertebrates during River Education Days at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Photo credit: Owen Johnson.



Above: Students search a sample of pond water to collect and identify aquatic invertebrates during River Education Days at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Photo credit: Owen Johnson.

That's when I knew my extra effort the previous day to kick loose some gravel in the cool, swift water of Bohemian Creek and gather whatever drifted into the collection net for this show and tell performance was worth it. The variety of caddisfly, mayfly, and stonefly larvae, scuds and other aquatic invertebrates I gathered, as well as some unexpected sculpins, formed the perfect cast of characters to accompany

and support me in convincing these students, particularly those who may have lacked a connection to nature, of the green roles these and other benthic organisms play as critical links in aquatic food webs. I likened the occurrence of deep burrowing mayflies in certain upper Mississippi River (UMR) habitats to the role of the proverbial canary in the coal mine. With the recent coal mine tragedy in West Virginia, I was also able to convince most of these students of the importance of aquatic invertebrates as sentinels of environmental health and safety.

Knowing I had this successful script to follow, as well as an even greater cast of unique characters direct from old man river to work with, I confidently took my

show on-the-road-again when asked with just a day's notice to connect a larger number of urban and rural "tweens" with nature during the annual River Education Days event held May 18-19 at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. With UMR Pool 6 providing a scenic background under a bright blue sky, a chorus of neotropical songbirds surrounding us in a balcony of trees, and a kiddie-pool filled with pond water harboring a variety of aquatic invertebrates to be discovered and identified, how could a day spent in the outdoors with nearly two-hundred eager-to-learn 5th-grade students be anything but a successful hit?

-- Mark Steingraeber
R3-LaCrosse FRO

More on River Education Days on page 17.

Thanks From Your Connecting People with Nature Work Group

Earlier this year the Midwest Region CPWN work group developed a short list of action items for 2010. On the list was the adoption of June as a month to reflect on the numerous successes of all Service stations and programs in this region. In addition, the group identified June as a time when schools are involved in their exciting end of year field trips, and it is the time of year when families begin to vacation and travel with their newly found freedom. "Schools: Out for the Summer!"

June is as always is chocked full of opportunities for stations to "piggy back" upon, when scheduling events and activities. National Boating and Fishing Week, National Trails Day or National Pollinators Week are just a few of the many campaigns and promotions that already exist. So, please do take advantage of these opportunities! As always, it is not necessary to "reinvent the wheel" but it is certainly necessary to

Below: Sponsored by Jordan River National Fish Hatchery and its partners, this kids fishing event celebrates the opening day of the Michigan trout season. USFWS Photo.



--Timothy J. Smigielski
Jordan River NFH

Left: Hooked for Life! This is why the USFWS sponsors and supports kids fishing events. USFWS Photo.

identify some "special times" to inspire ourselves and frankly, to congratulate ourselves.

It is with great pride that the CPWN work group congratulates each and every Service employee in this region for your tireless efforts

to connect the people of this region with their natural world. The future is bright for natural resource conservation and environmental stewardship because of YOU! Thanks.



Above: These students from Mancelona Elementary school, participants in the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery "Imaginature Program," assist in stocking brook trout before the kids opening day fishing event in April. USFWS Photo.



Protecting the Great Lakes from Asian carp has become a priority within the Great Lakes region as well as for the Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO). Fish biologists from the Columbia FWCO have spent four weeks electrofishing and netting along side of Carterville FWCO, LaCrosse FWCO, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Illinois DNR during February and March in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). The search has been for Asian carp that may have made it past an electrical barrier



Above: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologists pick common carp from trammel nets set to capture Asian carp in the Chicago Area Waterway System. USFWS Photo.

operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers near Romeoville, Ill. The electrical barrier was designed to physically cutoff migration of Asian carp from the Illinois River

to Lake Michigan. Only minor barriers (such as locks) exist that can restrict movement from the CAWS above the electrical barrier to Lake Michigan. Additionally, environmental DNA (eDNA) testing has already indicated that Asian carp DNA was present above the electrical barriers near Lake Michigan. The positive eDNA tests have intensified efforts



Above: Sampling for Asian carp takes place among the high rises downtown Chicago. USFWS Photo.

to reduce the risk of an Asian carp population from establishing in the Great Lakes.

Current sampling efforts are intended to remove any Asian carp from the CAWS and monitor their movement towards Lake Michigan.

During the cold winter month of February, electrofishing and trammel and gill netting efforts focused on areas of warm water discharges that may attract fish. While no Asian carp were detected using this sampling approach, the warm water discharge areas

generally attracted more common carp, gizzard shad, largemouth bass, and sunfish than nearby cold water areas. As the water warmed up the sampling protocol shifted to sample near barriers that may impede the spawning migration of Asian carp. A combination of fixed site and systematic sampling will be employed to ensure that the entire CAWS will be sampled to

evaluate the risk of Asian carp invading the Great Lakes.

The search for Asian carp in the CAWS has so far been a unique experience for biologists and pedestrians alike. It's not everyday someone gets to electrofish at the foot of the Sears Tower among the high rises of downtown Chicago. Pedestrians walking over bridges almost always take a second

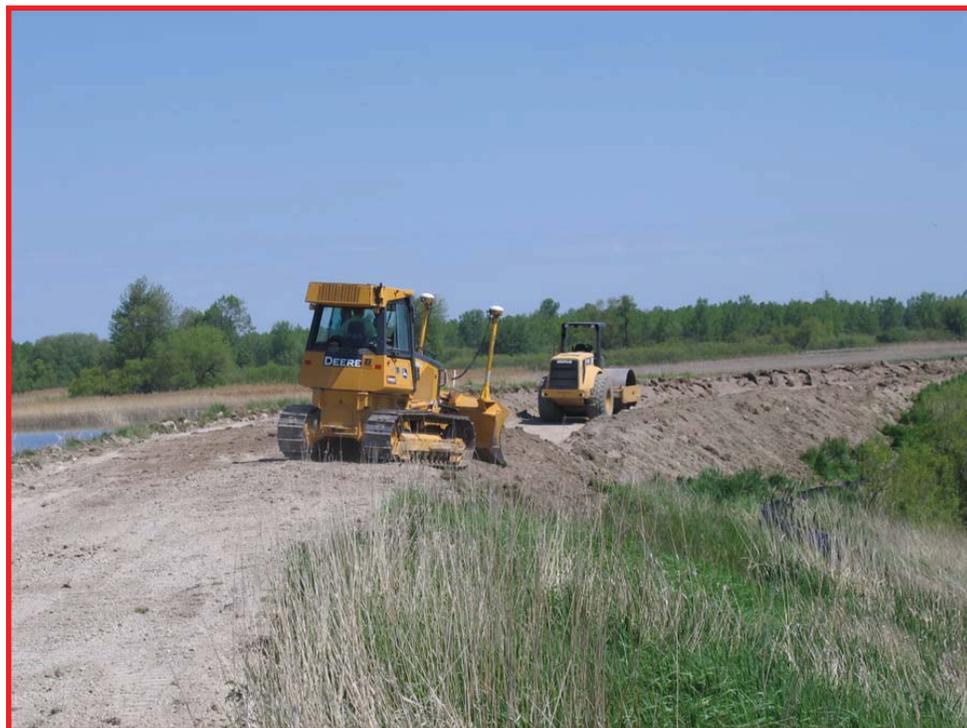
look as we electrofish below them. One can imagine their thoughts, "What are those people doing?" None the less, the issue of Asian carp invading the Great Lakes has brought deserved attention to the issue of aquatic invasive species. Supporting Asian carp management efforts is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's goal to protect aquatic ecosystems and promote cooperative efforts to prevent, control, and manage the spread of non-indigenous aquatic nuisance species.

--Joshua Schloesser
R3-Columbia FRO

Construction Starts on New Auto Tour Route at Shiawassee Refuge

Construction has begun on the new auto tour route at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge. This facility should be complete in time for opening in spring 2011. Currently, visitors mainly have access to four trails situated on the edges of the refuge and few get to see the wildlife spectacle that makes the refuge unique. The 7.5-mile Wildlife Drive will meander past forests, grasslands, marshes, open water pools, and the Shiawassee River and will enhance the ability of visitors to see waterfowl, herons, eagles and a great diversity of other wildlife. Further, visitors will be able to see the management practices the refuge uses to attract this abundance of wildlife.

The Wildlife Drive is funded via \$2.1M from the Federal Highway Administration, \$620K from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Deferred Maintenance account, and \$240K from FWS Visitor Facility Enhancement funds. Construction will include elevating low roads and improving the gravel road surface.



The new route should increase the refuge's visitor numbers substantially and provide a boost to the local economy. Recreational use at the refuge generated approximately \$1 million in economic activity during fiscal year 2006, according to a report by FWS entitled, *Banking on Nature 2006: The Economic Benefits to Local*

Above: Old road material is removed and replaced along Shiawassee Refuge's Wildlife Drive. Photo by Kile Kucher. USFWS photo.

Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation. Approximately 60,000 people visited Shiawassee Refuge in 2006, with non-residents accounting for 63 percent of the total expenditure. The Wildlife Drive will conservatively attract 30,000 new visitors annually. In fact, this facility is by far the most requested improvement to the refuge's visitor services program made by the public.

The refuge's new Wildlife Drive will improve wildlife observation opportunities for the public. Photo by Gary Kramer.



Milestones, Stepping Stones and Accomplishments

The open house and ribbon cutting ceremony, held on April 9 was a great success with over 400 visitors and school children attending.

The ceremony included an American flag presentation by the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center Base Honor Guard and singing of the National Anthem by Emma Strong, a student at Thunder Bay Junior High School. A Native American blessing and smudging ceremony were provided by Dwight "Bucko" Teeple of the Bay Mills Indian community. Speakers during the ceremony

included Alpena Mayor Carol Shafto, Doug Kowalski of Alpena Marc LCC, Mike Weimer the Fisheries ARD for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Region, John Pines a Staff Representative for Congressman Bart Stupak, Joel Sheltroun the State Representative for the 103rd House District, and Andy Neumann the State Representative for the 106th House District.

A ribbon cutting followed the ceremony with Carol Shafto, Mike Weimer, JoAnn Papenfuss the Staff Assistant to U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, John Pines,

Jim Peltier of Alpena Marc LCC, and Jean Kowalski the Principal of Wilson and Long Rapids Elementary Schools. Distinguished guests also included Beverly Bodem the District Director for State Senator Tony Stamas. Tours of our new facility were provided and we had activities for the approximately 250 students that attended.

Thank you to those who participated. We appreciate your support!
For images from the event visit the following link: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpenaevent.htm>.

Below: More than 400 school children, educators, community members and congressional staffers explored the new Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Michigan on Friday, April 9 during a ribbon cutting and open house event celebrating the completion of its new energy-efficient, LEEDS certified facility. For more information: www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/. USFWS Photo.



Above: The Jordan River National Fish Hatchery in (NFH) Elmira, Mich., broke ground on Friday, May 14 to mark the beginning of hatchery improvement projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These projects include the construction of two fish rearing buildings covering outdoor raceways, modernizing the fish hatchery effluent treatment system and installation of a geothermal heating system. USFWS photo.

Service Initiates First Honor Guard

On May 7, Greg Siekaniec Assistant Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System announced the selection of the new Honor Guard team for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Of the 12 honorees nominated by their regional chiefs from a pool of applicants, three were from the Midwest region: Dan Shamhart of Illinois River National Wildlife & Fishery Refuges, Samantha Fleming of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and Wesley Verrill of Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge. The announcement marks the first ever honorarium of its kind in the Service.

The duties of the Service Honor Guard are to honor and remember Service employees who have sacrificed their lives promoting wildlife conservation in the United States and promoting the safety and security of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Honor Guard will represent the Service during official functions as approved by the director and provide comfort and support to the survivors of those who have fallen. They will honor these officers by providing full honors funerals and graveside services, and by participating in ceremonies and official events where called upon by the Director.

Fleming, who is a refuge law enforcement officer, says she feels truly honored to have been selected. "I've been wanting to do this since it was first mentioned. It was pretty amazing." She says she's been to some Service



Above: Honoree Wesley Verrill of Big Muddy NWR out fishing. Photo courtesy of Wesley Verrill.

gatherings and had noticed that uniformity was lacking. The Honor Guard gives dedicated employees the means to display the Service's best face. "It's a great agency to be part of," she says, "the fact that we are moving forward with this honor guard is great...it's an honor."

Verrill who also is a refuge law enforcement officer was excited to hear the news, as well. "Wearing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife symbol is a great honor", he says, "and I definitely intend to serve well and wear the uniform proudly. I believe 100 percent in the program." Verrill says he wanted to serve because he wanted to make all of us proud in honoring our fallen heroes and

showing respect for their families and the Service. The importance of preserving and celebrating the traditions is evident when Verrill speaks. "I have a passion for protecting our wildlife and have high respects for those who have dedicated much of their time trying to make this world a safer place to live in," he says. "It's a great opportunity and I am looking forward to what lies ahead and the program."

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

Fish, Fish Everywhere; 300K and Counting

BY ANDY STAROSTKA, COLUMBIA FWCO

Crews from the Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) Habitat Assessment and Monitoring Program (HAMP) have captured 296,899 fish since the inception of the program in 2005. If all these fish captured were placed end to end, they would stretch over 9.86 miles. More than a third of these fish were captured during the 2007 field season when 109,043 fish were handled. The majority of these fish are small young-of-the-year (YOY) – the age group this project is intended to answer questions about. Sturgeon and native large river chub species are of particular interest to this program. Sixty-five pallid sturgeon, 9,417 shovelnose sturgeon and



-USFWS/Colby Wrasse

These young-of-the-year sturgeon are a few of the thousands of sturgeon captured in the lower Missouri River while sampling for the Habitat Assessment and Monitoring Program (HAMP). To date, 65 pallid sturgeon have been identified during HAMP assessments.

1,139 unidentified (YOY) sturgeon have been captured. This constitutes one of the largest YOY sturgeon data sets from the Missouri River. Native chubs are thought to be important prey of the endangered pallid sturgeon and we have captured 59,838 to date. 2007 was a banner year for YOY fish and this led to the highest annual catch for the program to date. More than a third (37,297 to be exact) of the 2007 catch was YOY catfish. These catches combined with

high temperatures and humidity led to some very exhausted and sore-fingered field personnel.

HAMP was created to evaluate shallow water habitat in the channelized portion of the Missouri River. Shallow, slow moving areas were once abundant and have largely been lost due to changes to the river for navigation and flood control. This program's primary objective is to determine habitat use of YOY and small bodied fishes as it relates to shallow water habitat to guide habitat restoration efforts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Along with capturing a lot of fish, HAMP crews have collected depth, water velocity and substrate information and have classified habitats associated with these fish. For example, they record whether a sample was collected in association with a dike, whether that dike was notched, whether there was a sandbar associated with the sample, and whether large woody debris or aquatic vegetation was present. This information will allow identification of habitat types and other measurable physical features that are associated with a species or group of fishes so that appropriate habitat can be created.

The dynamic and complex nature of large river ecosystems make it difficult to understand all the important factors that drive fish year class strength and fish

communities. As HAMP crews collect more data in the future, this substantial data base will improve our understanding of large river ecosystems, restoration efforts and the needs of the species that call the river home.

These results will lead to our vision in leadership in science to recover an endangered species and protect sensitive communities.

For further info about the Columbia FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/columbiafisheries/>

And the winner is ... Acipenseriformes?

BY MARK STEINGRAEBER, LA CROSSE FWCO

Did you happen to be one of millions of television viewers around the globe who recently watched the Academy Awards? Did you hear a host announce Acipenseriformes a winner? No? I didn't either. Though I couldn't help but hope that one day in the future, members of this taxonomic order of ancient fish will be widely recognized as winners in their struggle to survive, despite the fact that their roe typically commands a 'king's ransom' when cured with salt and sold as caviar.

Looking back just a bit further in time, it seems somewhat peculiar that here in the frozen Midwest, I received an unexpected phone call while at work on February 11 from a woman in southern California. Speaking with a strange accent, she asked me what CITES permits were required to conduct legitimate international trade in paddlefish caviar, an increasingly popular and less costly domestic substitute for most sturgeon caviars. As a biologist with no previous experience in fielding a regulatory question like this, and feeling just a bit out of my league, I quickly consulted a special agent with an office down the hall who recommended the woman contact a Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife inspector in the Los Angeles area for more detailed information.

Whether it is beluga sturgeon from the Caspian Sea, Atlantic sturgeon on the east coast, lake stur-



-USFWS images

Fish classified in the Order Acipenseriformes, such as the paddlefish in the left image and sturgeon in the right image, supply most of the worldwide demand for caviar.

geon in the Great Lakes or paddlefish in Midwestern rivers, a network of Fish and Wildlife Service personnel from Washington D.C. to the Port of Los Angeles to the National Forensics Laboratory, as well many others in field and regional office locations around the country, all play diverse supporting roles to protect and conserve sturgeon and paddlefish populations on a global scale.

So the next time you hear that caviar is being served as an appetizer at the post-Oscar award celebrations, remember the cast of unseen extras comprised of hundreds of dedicated Fish and Wildlife Service employees who help make this possible. And if you happen to be one of them, remember to take a bow... you've earned it!

For further info about the La Crosse FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/lacrossefisheries/>

Fall Lake Trout Assessment at Six Fathom Bank

BY ANJANETTE BOWEN, ALPENA FWCO

Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) has been conducting fall lake trout spawning surveys at two offshore reefs since 1993-Six Fathom Bank and Yankee Reef. Both of these reefs are located in the central part of Lake Huron and have the preferred habitat, honeycomb limestone rock, of spawning lake trout. Alpena FWCO attempts to conduct a spawning survey annually at both reefs; however, the weather during the fall can be quite challenging with gale force winds and high seas, which may not provide an opportunity for Alpena FWCO to sample one or both reefs. As a result, each year the priority reef alternates in the event that two fall cruises are not possible.

This year, survey efforts proved to be quite challenging due to weather. The priority reef in 2009 was Six Fathom Bank which is located about 40 miles offshore of Alpena, Mich. The *M/V Spencer F. Baird* arrived in Alpena on October 14. Due to consecutive days of gale force winds and high seas, the staff from the Alpena FWCO had to wait nearly two weeks to conduct the lake trout spawning survey. On October 27, the vessel finally cast lines and departed for Six Fathom Bank. On board the *Spencer F. Baird* was the vessel crew which consisted of captain Michael Perry, marine engineer Robert Bergstrum, seamen fishermen David Bohn along with the assessment crew which consisted of John Johnston, Scott Koproski and Adam Kowalski.

USFWS Partners with EPA to Implement the Great Lake Restoration Initiative

In FY 2010 the Obama administration invested \$475 million to fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). GLRI is a driver for environmental action in the Great Lakes and represents a collaborative effort on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and 15 other federal agencies to address the most significant environmental problems in the Great Lakes. Through an interagency agreement with the EPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been allocated approximately \$65 million to implement GLRI priority programs, projects and activities to protect, restore, and maintain the Great Lakes ecosystem. The Service's GLRI projects focus on Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern, Invasive Species, Habitat and Wildlife Protection and Restoration, and Accountability,

Below: A Higher Vantage Point: The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will address the most significant environmental concerns of the Great Lakes. USFWS Photo.



Education, Monitoring, Evaluation, Communication and Partnerships.

Above: Lake Superior. Photo by Samantha Elayne.

To increase transparency surrounding how the Service's GLRI funding is translating into on-the-ground action, the Service

has a new website dedicated exclusively to spotlighting GLRI funded projects. Interested in learning more about GLRI and the Service's GLRI projects? Go to: <http://www.fws.gov/GLRI>



For additional information please contact Katie Steiger-Meister, External Affairs Outreach Coordinator for GLRI, at Katie_Steiger-Meister@fws.gov or (612) 713-5317.

--Katie Steiger-Meister
External Affairs

Brazilian Film Crew Highlights the Upper Mississippi River

Yes, the biggest river in the world flows across Brazil, however, Brazilians are still interested in the Mississippi River. On April 17 a crew of three Brazilians and a contractor hired by the State Department shot footage and conducted interviews near La Crosse, Wis. The Brazilian news team is shooting a series of informative TV news stories on critical environmental issues, to be jointly produced by the sister Brazilian television networks, TV Amazonica and Amazon Sat for broadcast throughout Brazil. The U.S. Department of State's Office of Broadcast Support (OBS) invites serious, credible journalists to come to the U.S. to produce TV news reports and documentaries on subjects and themes of need or



Art Thicke being interviewed by Brazilian Film Crew. USFWS Photo.

goal to reduce chemicals in our waterways by working with the county waste program to collect unused prescription drugs. Our second story highlighted the Art and Jean Thicke Farm and how their operation reduced sediment and nutrient runoff, Tex Hawkins was led on this story. The third feature was of the lock and dam operation along the Upper Mississippi. A special thanks to Terry

interest in their country. To that end, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia and the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. are sponsoring this project, through a grant to TV Amazonica and Amazon Sat. These timely reports will be taped in the United States to highlight "Successful green experiences in the U.S." that can serve as examples to the Amazon region. The series will examine efforts being made by the U.S. federal government, state and municipal governments, businesses, and private citizens to combat pollution, as well as preserve green spaces and natural resources. The team filmed three news features, in the La Crosse area, about the Upper Mississippi River. The first was an Operation Turn In aimed at reducing pharmaceutical products from being disposed of in our waste water which eventually ends up in our rivers. Mark Steingraeber (FWS) was the lead on this story and identified the



Above: Helen Bernardes is filmed by Ricardo Alexandre as Larry Clamage takes photo at Lock and Dam 7. USFWS Photo.



Above: Mark Steingraeber being interviewed by the Brazilian Film Crew. USFWS Photo.

Jessessky from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for touring the group. The Brazilians developed a great sense for how important the Mississippi River is to Americans and what steps are being taken to improve the environment.

--Scott Yess, R3-LaCrosse FRO

Fostering Diversity in the Conservation Community

Tameka Dandridge of the East Lansing Field Office participated in the 2010 Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) Ornithological Congress as a moderator for the Fostering Diversity in the Conservation Community session. This session took place on the first day of the Congress and was composed of seven speakers from Michigan State University (MSU), Ducks Unlimited (DU), Sierra Club, MSU Extension (MSUE), Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), and the Brain Injury Association of Michigan.

A Conservation Education Specialist from MSU and 4H discussed some of the best practices for mentoring youth and how to get and keep more youth involved in outdoor activities. She also advised that research has shown that one-day special events are not effective at getting and keeping youth interested in outdoor activities. The DU representative spoke of their Greenwings program. This program introduces children to wetland conservation and



waterfowl habitats. A community organizer from the Sierra Club discussed environmental justice in Detroit; the history of many African Americans' disconnect to the land; and ways for all of us to get involved to educate all youth on the importance of conservation.

The Social Worker and Tribal Extension Educator with MSUE provided us with some of her tribal (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians) customs, including the importance of animals and bird feathers during ceremonies. As most of us are discussing ways to get and keep children interested in the outdoors, the majority of children in her tribal nation and neighboring tribes are very much involved in outdoor activities.

I also learned of a program that is sponsored by the MDNRE called, Becoming an Outdoors

Woman (BOW). As implied, BOW aims to educate women and girls in hunting, fishing, or provide assistance in other outdoor recreational activities such as kayaking and rock climbing. Lastly, a representative from MDNRE and the Brain Injury Association of Michigan provided information on state parks that are accessible to those with disabilities and activities and equipment provided by the parks for assistance. Overall, I found the session very informative and educational and plan to become more involved in diversifying the conservation community.

--Tameka Dandridge, R3-East Lansing FO

The Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) is a cooperative partnership to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation emphasizing voluntary stewardship. The focus of the MiBCI is on Michigan birds, but coordination of conservation efforts will be required at the regional, continental, and even hemispheric levels, since most birds are migratory. In the Upper Midwest, a regional approach will be necessary to provide the appropriate types, amounts, and distribution of habitats for conservation efforts to be successful.

Wood duck. Photo by Mike Sweet.



Around the Region

Sherri Collins

A visit to Sherri Collins', Administrative Officer for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge, office is a walk into a page in a home decorating magazine. Colorful dragonfly sculptures decorate one wall and whimsical butterflies are strategically placed throughout her office. A butterfly Tiffany-like lamp illuminates her office and you can tell Sherri enjoys the calmness of her workspace.

Being interviewed is not something Sherri really wanted. However, what prompted this interview was that her family was featured as the Boy Scout Focus Family of the Year for the Winona, Minn. United Way. When asked about this award she quickly states, "It's not an award, we were just featured." However, after a short discussion about why they were featured, it could easily be considered an award to the rest of us.

For over 13 years Sherri has been an active member of Cub Scout Pack 54 in Alma, Wis. beginning when her oldest son, Tim joined Tiger Cubs. That led to Sherri serving as Cub Master, Tiger Den leader, Wolf leader, Bear leader, Webelos Assistant leader and the Committee Chair. She exclaimed, "I've held just about every office a person could hold in Cub Scouts." Her husband, Lee Collins, has served as Scout Master for nearly 12 years. They guided Tim through to Eagle Scout rank in 2007 and their other son, Josh is currently a Life Scout working towards his Eagle Scout. In the fall, Sherri will embark on a

journey to obtain wood badge, the most advanced training available for scout leaders.

This is remarkable for a lady who was a brownie drop-out. Sherri commented, "I dropped out because it was too unorganized." She recalls, "I remember going to school and seeing some girls in their brownies uniforms. I didn't know we had a meeting, so I didn't know if I could go because I didn't have my uniform on. This made me realize the communication between the parents was awful." This says a lot about her work-style since she knew this at the young age of seven.

She says her love of nature led her to organize a spring neighborhood clean-up when she was 10 years old. This was a few years after the first Earth Day celebration. Growing up in the suburbs around Washington D.C., she knew that she wanted to move to a rural life. She hated the traffic, the rush-rush and the smog.

Below: Sherri sitting at her desk at Upper Miss. in Winona. USFWS Photo.



That dream came true when she met and married the love of her life, Lee. He asked her if she wanted to move to a dairy farm in western Wisconsin. She left her job at USDA, APHIS and moved to the Midwest. They took over Lee's uncle's farm with 40 milking cows. After helping out on the farm for a couple of years, Sherri started working at the Farmer's Home Administration. Lee eventually completed the Wisconsin Master Plumber's program and opened his own small business, Collins Plumbing, Inc.

Collins interviewed for a job with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge in 1992. She recalls her interview with then Winona District Manager, Bob Drieslein, "He was explaining about the various surveys conducted and he said that they did [waterfall] surveys. I was very excited since I had always loved waterfalls. We had been to Niagara Falls for our honeymoon. It wasn't until I started working here that I realized it was Bob's Chicago accent that makes waterfowl sound like waterfall."

A giggle and a look of deep respect washes over Sherri's face and she says, "I realized the first day on the job how lucky I was, and still am, to be a part of a group of professionals that are passionate about the resource, passionate about our mission and passionate about what they do. I can't think of anything else I would want to do and I'm thankful that as an administrative officer I am part of this awesome team."

River Education Days at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

On May 19-20, approximately 600 fifth grade students from 9 Wisconsin counties and 4 Minnesota counties participated in the fifth Annual River Education Days at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

Approximately 5 federal and state agencies as well as several private individuals took part in this amazing opportunity to get children back outside. The four event themes included wetlands, wildlife, habitats, and river history. Topics from 18 stations included



Above: Ann Runstrom shows students several species of fish they caught on the Trempealeau refuge during RED May 19. Photo by Owen Johnson.



Above: Mark Steingraeber explains equipment used by fishery biologists to a crowd of students during RED. Photo by Owen Johnson.

duck identification, forestry, archeology, Native American history, geology, aquatic creatures, birds of prey, invasive species, fish and invertebrates, and many others. Children received many

hands-on learning experiences while being outdoors.

La Crosse NFWCO's fishery biologists Mark Steingraeber and Ann Runstrom presented fishery biologist equipment and live fish identification and Heidi Keuler presented the topic, "Invertebrate Investigators". Students got

pretty wet while they learned about aquatic inverts and fish— how to look for them, identify them, what equipment to use, and what the aquatic species tell us about the environment. Many kids got to touch fish and inverts for the first time ever and were excited to tell their families all about it when they got home.

--Heidi Keuler



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