

National Wildlife Refuge Association Honors Excellence

The National Wildlife Refuge Association has honored a Midwestern refuge manager, a Texas volunteer, and a biologist and Friends group from the same New Mexico refuge with 2015 awards.

Tom Kerr Named Refuge Manager of the Year

Tom Kerr received the Paul Kroegel Refuge Manager of the Year Award. Manager at St. Croix Wetland Management District and Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, he was recognized for his ability to connect with the local community.

Kerr, who has been with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1989, has worked closely with the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District since the group was established in 2010. In addition, he has spearheaded many other partnerships that encourage collaboration between the public and the wetland management district and among the refuge, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Wisconsin.

John Vradenburg, Employee of the Year

Vradenburg is a supervisory biologist at Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. He was cited for going “above and beyond the call of duty to not only ensure the conservation of sensitive species, but also to involve the public in conservation efforts.”

In nine years at the refuge, Vradenburg has helped improve the soil quality and the water drawdown system both to increase native vegetation and control invasive species. He was honored for his foresight in devising a management plan for the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse before it was listed in 2014 as endangered, thus positioning the refuge to aid in its recovery.

Wiley “Dub” Lyon, Volunteer of the Year Award

Lyon was honored for “his unwavering support for the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.” Lyon, a retired American Airlines aircraft landing, takeoff and maintenance supervisor, has been a volunteer at the refuge northwest of Austin for the past seven years.

He serves as the volunteer coordinator, organizes the annual Friends meeting and refuge volunteer awards ceremony, works with other volunteers to make sure teachers are able to schedule environmental education programs, collects public use data, and always finds ways to accomplish repair jobs cost-effectively. He has been elected as president of the Friends of Balcones twice and has been on the Board of Directors for six years.

Friends of the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge received the Molly Krival Friends Group of the Year Award. The Friends organization coordinates the annual Festival of the Cranes, an event that draws more than 6,000 people from around the world, and generates \$2.5 million, making it the greatest income-generating event in Socorro County, NM.

The Friends also provide environmental education opportunities for students from the surrounding community. In addition, the Friends advocate for the refuge and the Refuge System

by visiting the U.S. Capitol, hosting events for legislators on the refuge and writing letters to their representatives.

CAPTION

Tom Kerr, manager at St. Croix Wetland Management District and Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, received the 2015 Paul Kroegel Refuge Manager of the Year Award. (USFWS)

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