



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Service Proposes Downlisting or Delisting Gray Wolf throughout Most of Its Range

Robust wolf populations in the upper Great Lakes area and a successful wolf reintroduction program in the northern U.S. Rocky Mountains prompted the Service in July to formally propose to reclassify the gray wolf from endangered to threatened in some parts of the country and remove it from the Endangered Species list in other areas.

The move would affect the status of gray wolves throughout most of the conterminous 48 states; however, Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest would remain endangered, as would red wolves (a separate wolf species) in the Southeast.

“The Endangered Species Act gave us the tools we needed to achieve this milestone,” said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. “We used the law’s protections and its flexibility to structure wolf recovery to meet the needs of the species and those of the people. This is truly an endangered species success story.”

Gray wolves throughout the conterminous United States are currently listed as endangered, except in Minnesota where they are considered threatened. Wolves in Alaska are not protected by the Endangered Species Act. Under the Service’s proposal, gray wolves in the conterminous 48 states would be divided into four distinct population segments, each to be addressed individually:

■ **Western Great Lakes population** (includes Minnesota, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin): Because of continued wolf population increases, wolves in these states would be reclassified from endangered to threatened.

■ **Northeastern population** (includes Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont): Wolves would be reclassified from endangered to threatened. Despite the absence of documented wolf populations in the Northeast, the Service believes there is high potential for wolf recovery in these states, which fall within the gray wolf’s historical range.



Making a comeback.
In large part because of successful recovery efforts, the Service proposed delisting or downlisting the gray wolf throughout much of its range.
FWS photo: Karen Hollingsworth.

■ **Western population** (includes Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and portions of Arizona and New Mexico): These wolves would be reclassified from endangered to threatened. The non-essential, experimental status of wolves in the Yellowstone National Park area and central Idaho would remain, and a special rule would extend similar flexible conservation and control measures to the entire Western population.

■ **Southwestern (Mexican gray wolf) population** (includes portions of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico): Wolves in these areas would retain their current status of endangered. This includes Mexican gray wolves reintroduced in 1998 and 1999 to reestablish a wild population; 22 Mexican wolves currently live in the wild.

■ **Remainder of the conterminous 48 states:** Gray wolves are not believed to be present outside the four areas described above, and their restoration in these areas is not necessary in order to achieve wolf recovery. The Service proposes to delist any wolves that may occur there now or in the future.

The Service’s proposal to delist or reclassify gray wolves comes at a time when Eastern wolf populations in some areas have reached or exceeded the numerical goals needed for recovery. In Minnesota, where wolves were never completely extirpated, numbers climbed from less than 1,000 in the early 1970s to an estimated 2,445 animals in 1999.

Today wolves inhabit much of northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Wisconsin wolf population is currently estimated at 248, while upper Michigan hosts 216 animals.

The Service intends to work closely with state, tribal and private partners to explore options for wolf recovery in the Northeast, being particularly sensitive to the needs of private landowners, as their cooperation is essential if recovery is to occur. An education and information campaign will explain the implications of any recovery proposal considered.

In the northern Rocky Mountain states of Idaho, Wyoming and Montana, progress toward wolf recovery has followed quickly on the heels of the Service’s historic reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in 1995 and 1996. Wolves in Yellowstone and central Idaho now number more than 250. An additional 63 naturally occurring gray wolves live in northwestern Montana.

*Hugh Vickery, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

Solving the Mystery of the Frogs

At a July 6 event near Washington, D.C., the Service announced a study of national wildlife refuges to investigate the cause of malformed frogs, toads and salamanders. This summer, biologists and volunteers are studying 43 refuges in 31 states from Alaska to Hawaii and Maryland to California, focusing on the impact of pollutants—especially pesticides—on amphibian malformations.

“What’s happening to these amphibians, and what their plight can tell us about our own environment, are some of the questions the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to answer as we kick off a first ever national amphibian survey of our refuge system,” said Director Jamie Rappaport Clark at the event.

Amphibians are good indicators of significant environmental changes. Frogs and toads are highly sensitive to their environments, since they breathe at least partly through their skin. Scientists are studying a variety of possible causes for the declines and malformations, including disease and fungal infections, habitat loss, thinning ozone and increased ultraviolet radiation, pollution and other contaminant factors. The potential combined impact of these factors makes it more difficult for scientists to determine the cause.

The Service launched the study during the day-long July event at Mabott Pond on Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland, some 45 minutes from Washington, D.C. Local volunteers and Girl Scout troops assisted biologists from the Service’s Annapolis, Maryland, ecological services field office in checking ponds on the refuge for malformed frogs. They found about a dozen frogs, although none were malformed.



Sleuthing. Girl scouts helped Service biologists to survey a refuge pond in search of deformed frogs. FWS photo: LaVonda Walton.

In her welcoming speech, Clark also recognized the significance of holding such an event at Patuxent.

“It seems fitting to launch this national amphibian study at Patuxent Research Refuge, where some of the key research was done to link DDT to reproductive problems in peregrine falcons, bald eagles and other raptors,” she said.

That research led the Environmental Protection Agency to ban DDT in 1972.

In the last five years, biologists have seen an increasing number of frogs and toads with severe malformations throughout the United States and around the world. Surveys conducted in 1997 in the Northeast and Midwest found malformation rates ranging up to 17.9 percent at some of the refuges.

“Frog populations around the world are in a state of dramatic decline,” said Clark. “When frogs and toads are either not found at all or are found with malformations on our national wildlife refuges, there is something wrong.

“We are here today to try to find out what that something is,” she said.

This year, scientists will study malformed frogs, toads and salamanders, as well as amphibian eggs, to determine the effect of pesticides on these species. Data acquired through the refuge studies done this year will be analyzed along with data gathered from other agencies on other suspected causes of decline and malformations.

Building on the information gathered from these studies and using other existing data, the Service will create a comprehensive map of trouble spots nationwide and provide concrete management guidelines for wildlife refuges and other land managers to address potential problems.

The study is part of the Department of the Interior’s Amphibian Initiative. The Clinton Administration has charged a multi-agency taskforce—made up of representatives from the departments of Interior, Agriculture, Justice, Defense, and State, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution—with determining the causes of declines and malformations and instituting the appropriate actions to halt the disappearance of amphibians.

Today, eighteen species of frogs, toads and salamanders are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Since 1989, scientists have documented four major “hot spots” for amphibian declines worldwide: western North America, Central America, northeast Australia and Puerto Rico. Some of the American declines have occurred in the most unlikely spots—the nation’s refuges, parks and wilderness areas.

On the cover.

Somber moment. A visitor takes in the Fallen Comrades memorial wall at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The memorial, which honors Service employees who lost their lives in the line of duty, was officially dedicated at a May ceremony. See article, page 24. FWS photo.

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Solving the Mystery of the Frogs (continued)

In 1997, the Service began conducting surveys on some national wildlife refuges in the Northeast and Midwest. Biologists found high malformation rates on four refuges in the Midwest and nine refuges in the Northeast, including Patuxent and Eastern Neck refuges in Maryland and Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR in Virginia.

Clark encouraged the public to get involved in protecting amphibians.

“Homeowners use up to 10 times more chemical pesticides per acre on their lawns than farmers use on crops. We can all help by choosing non-chemical weed controls whenever possible, minimizing our use of fertilizer and reducing our dependence on pesticides,” she said. “If we all take these actions, we will not only be helping amphibians, but we will be taking care of our watersheds and other species like birds and fish as well.”

*Cindy Hoffman, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*



Former Bombing Range Becomes National Wildlife Refuge

As wildlife conservation enters a new century, resource stewards increasingly seek out and discover the wildlife values inherent in open spaces that haven't always been wilderness. That's especially true east of the Mississippi, where large tracts of undeveloped land are less common.

The efforts of some dedicated Service employees and their counterparts in the Department of Defense resulted in the protection of one of those overlooked places, Big Oaks NWR located on the Army's former Jefferson Proving Ground in Madison, Indiana.

Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark joined Indiana Congressman Baron Hill, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army Paul Johnson and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Jimmie Dishner for a July 8 ceremony dedicating Big Oaks, the 525th unit in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Carved out of prime Indiana farmland at the beginning of World War II and used for years as an ordnance and bombing test range, Jefferson Proving Ground was closed to the public for more than five decades. Continued use of high explosives rendered part of the area dangerous for humans but the shelling did remarkably little damage to wildlife habitat.

At the dedication ceremony, Clark noted that military bases have proven in many cases to be excellent sanctuaries for wildlife. She praised the Army for its stewardship of the habitat that forms the core of Big Oaks.

“Back in the late 80s, I served as the fish and wildlife administrator for the Department of the Army, a job that required me, among other things, to look at how military training exercises could be made wildlife-friendly,” Clark said. “It was not as difficult a job as you might think, and so it is not surprising to me that right here on this former military range, we've got an amazing array of wildlife.”

With 50,000 acres of forest, grassland and wetland habitat, Big Oaks encompasses one of the largest remaining contiguous blocks of habitat in the region. The new refuge provides managed habitat for 120 species of breeding birds, the federally endangered



The latest addition. *Big Oaks NWR represents one of a growing number of refuges located on former military grounds. FWS photo: James R. Fisher.*

Indiana bat and 41 species of fish. The refuge also is home to white-tailed deer, wild turkey, river otters and coyotes.

Large blocks of unfragmented forest are rare in the Midwest and Big Oaks NWR represents a unique opportunity to protect interior forest habitat critical to neotropical migrant songbirds and other wildlife that cannot survive in smaller, scattered patches of forest.

Under an agreement with the Army and Air Force, the Service will operate Big Oaks NWR through a 25-year real-estate permit, with the Army retaining ownership of the land. The Air Force will retain use of a bombing range which is not included in the portion designated as a refuge, and is located on less than 1,000 acres near the center of the former proving ground.

Public access for wildlife viewing, hunting and other recreational activities will be provided at the refuge, consistent with precautions needed to protect the public. Access will be limited to about 27,000 acres of the refuge because of the continued presence of unexploded ordnance. Large safety buffer areas separate the Air Force range from public use areas of the refuge.

*Chris Tollefson, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

Overcoming Obstacles, Service Enforces Groundbreaking Caviar Import Requirements

When the Service announced new requirements on the importation of caviar in 1998, staff in the Division of Law Enforcement for the Northeast region—and their counterparts nationwide—swung into action. With some help from the Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, Region 5 special agents and wildlife inspectors began working with the U.S. Customs Service to enforce the new caviar laws at ports of entry up and down the East Coast—some of the busiest in the nation.

The global plight of the Caspian Sea sturgeon, source of the world's most prized caviar, prompted the 151 member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) last year to introduce new controls on commercial trade in all sturgeon species and their products—including caviar.

Caviar importers must now obtain a CITES export permit from their home country; importers must also declare their shipments to the Service and make them available to wildlife inspectors for examination.

Companies shipping caviar without appropriate permits violate not only CITES requirements but also the Endangered Species Act and the Lacey Act—a federal statute outlawing interstate traffic in birds and other animals killed unlawfully in their state of origin, and providing international trade controls to prevent the importation of injurious species.

The Service worked with the caviar industry to publicize the new requirements and establish a process for inspection. Enforcing the new laws wasn't easy, though, and the Service has overcome a number of obstacles to its initial efforts.

"We were unprepared," admitted Senior Resident Agent Bill Donato of the Service's Valley Stream law enforcement office on Long Island, New York. "We had no cold storage facility and we were unable to hold caviar."

To solve the problem, the Service purchased a custom-made refrigeration unit of the type used by the food storage industry. Since caviar must be held at a significantly lower temperature than most food products—25 to 27 degrees—the Service had to have a unit specially made.

"Most refrigerators you could get in the New York City area either froze things or refrigerated them at 40 degrees," Donato said. "Ours also had to be alarmed for temperature control, break-in and loss of power. We also have a natural gas-operated backup generator."

The 20 x 12 x 8 foot refrigerator is about a third full, Donato said, and Service officials hope they will not need to purchase an additional unit.

Another important component to the Service's dragnet on caviar smuggling—the most important component, according to Donato—is DNA identification techniques being perfected by the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon. When a country issues an export permit it guarantees the caviar contained in the shipment was legally acquired; DNA testing identifies which species of sturgeon produced the caviar being tested.

Service wildlife inspectors may remove a small amount of caviar from a shipment and send it to the forensics lab for analysis. If a sample is found to be illegal or does not match the species stated on the export permit, the shipment is seized and the importer prosecuted for violating federal wildlife laws.

"Identification [of sturgeon species] is key," Donato said. "If we can't use DNA we can't enforce the law."

Donato stressed the importance of the forensics lab's work in helping to identify illegal imports and eventually prosecute them for violating CITES regulations.

"Without the forensics lab we might as well kiss the enforcement goodbye," he said.

Caviar Smuggler Sentenced to Prison Term, Fined

In the first case upholding international protection for declining wild sturgeon populations, caviar importer Eugeniusz Kozcuk of Stamford, Connecticut, was sentenced to 20 months in a federal prison and fined \$25,000 in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of New York in June.

He also forfeits \$70,000 and 2,000 pounds of caviar worth more than \$2 million, according to Ed Grace of the Division of Law Enforcement in Valley Stream, New York.

Kozcuk was found guilty last November of conspiracy, smuggling and violating the Lacey Act, a federal law protecting wildlife taken, transported or sold in violation of any U.S. law or treaty. He and a business associate paid off-duty airline employees to smuggle suitcases packed with caviar into the United States, where they were intercepted by federal investigators in October 1998, Grace said.

Business records revealed sales of 21,000 pounds of caviar during a seven-month period when only 88 pounds of caviar were legally imported.

Two co-defendants have yet to be sentenced. Wieslaw Rozbicki was convicted of a felony Lacey Act violation and Polish national Andrzej Lepkowski pleaded guilty to conspiracy to smuggle wildlife.

Diana Weaver, External Affairs, Hadley, Massachusetts

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Overcoming Obstacles (continued)

Service wildlife inspectors have inspected more than 200 tons of caviar at major ports of entry nationwide since the CITES protections went into effect. Significant quantities of black market roe have been intercepted not only in New York, but also in Boston, Newark, Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Chicago and Dallas.

Last November, guilty verdicts handed down against two caviar importers by a federal jury marked the first successful criminal prosecution under the new CITES requirements. One of the three men was recently sentenced to prison terms and fined (see sidebar).

The Service doesn't yet know the extent of the damage done to sturgeon stocks as a result of illegal exportation, Donato said, but habitat degradation and overharvest have caused dramatic population declines since the 1970s. Service biologists, forensics experts and law enforcement personnel are working to ensure that, through enforcement of trade controls and industry self-regulation, sturgeon will remain a part of this nation's—and the world's—wildlife heritage.

*Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

Kids Help Kick Off Fishing Week in Nation's Capital

Hundreds of students from 12 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia helped kick off National Fishing Week 2000, America's 21st annual celebration of recreational fishing.

National Fishing Week, which ran from June 5 through June 11, drew some 500,000 people to more than 2,000 fishing tournaments, derbies, clinics, casting contests, open houses and other family-oriented activities and educational programs throughout the country.

The Washington, D.C., kickoff event held on the National Mall opened with a Pathway to Fishing clinic designed to introduce the fourth, fifth and sixth graders to the basics of angling. Each student received a fishing rod courtesy of South Bend Sporting Goods, Pure Fishing and Zebco, and got to try their hands at catching bass, sunfish and catfish.

National Fishing Week began in 1979 to focus public attention on the benefits of fishing, recreational fishing opportunities and aquatic resource conservation and stewardship. It is organized by the National Fishing Week Steering Committee, a nonprofit organization composed of federal and state resource agencies and representatives of the sportfishing industry.

*Ken Burton, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*



Waiting for a bite. *This young angler was content to observe the scene as he cast his line and waited for a sunfish or catfish to bite. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.*



Fun for everyone. *Disabled children got in on the fun of fishing, too. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.*



Way to go! *Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark and Assistant Director for External Affairs Tom Melius congratulate one of the young anglers on his catch. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.*

Record Number of Turtle Nests Gives Biologists Hope

Approximately 5,250 nests have been protected so far this year for the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle on Mexico's Gulf Coast, providing biologists with hope that the turtle is continuing to recover from the brink of extinction.

The current number already exceeds the approximately 3,875 nests protected during the entire 1999 nesting season. By the close of the nesting season in August, actual nesting adults in Mexico may exceed 6,000.

"It is a testament to the species' tenacity and longevity," said Nancy Kaufman, regional director for the Service's Southwest region. "And it is also a testament to the cooperative willpower of two nations, with support from nearby residents and a variety of other partners."

In the spring of 1947, 40,000 female Kemp's ridley sea turtles came ashore to nest just south of Brownsville, Texas, during the largest documented "arribada" by Kemp's ridleys. With anywhere between 80 and 140 eggs laid in each nest, there was no indication that the species was in danger of becoming extinct.

By the late 1970s, an arribada rarely reached 200 females. The species was almost completely decimated because of a combination of threats: human encroachment, including poaching for eggs and meat; disease epidemics; predation of eggs by crabs, birds and fish; and unmanaged fishing practices. The turtle was listed as endangered throughout its range in 1970.

The Service has led turtle recovery efforts for the United States since 1978, funding research, monitoring and hatchling release programs.

"Thanks to longstanding partnerships between U.S. and Mexican wildlife agencies and more recent involvement of conservation and industry groups, we're beginning to see real progress in restoring these ancient marine creatures to their rightful place in the Gulf of Mexico," said Kaufman.



Moving up. *Populations of endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico continue to climb thanks to cooperative conservation efforts between the Service and Mexico. FWS photo: Richard Byles.*

Though the Kemp's ridley sea turtle cannot be considered safe, recovery efforts mean the species may not face possible extinction. Continued recovery efforts for the Kemp's ridley will include protection of known nesting beaches and adjacent waters, plus further reductions in mortality from incidental catch of turtles in commercial shrimping operations in the United States and Mexico.

Biologists want to ensure a nesting population of 10,000 turtles per year before they consider upgrading the species' status to threatened, but they remain cautiously optimistic that numbers of nesting turtles will continue to increase.

Ben Ikenson, External Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Rounding up Razorbacks to Conserve a Species

Each spring, fish biologists from the Service and several other federal and state resource management agencies gather on the lower Colorado River for a razorback round-up coinciding with the spawning of the endangered razorback sucker, a fish named for the keel-like ridge on its back that helps it navigate fast-flowing water.

With the aid of electrofishing gear and trammel nets, biologists collect sexually mature fish, haul them to Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery in western Arizona, and spawn them. Later, they return the live adult razorbacks to the waters from which they were collected.

Biologists use this annual round-up as a management tool to conserve this species, which is faced with habitat loss and competition from non-native species. Data collected during the round-up help biologists determine the distribution and population abundance of the imperiled razorback sucker.

"Razorback sucker populations took a heavy hit from habitat loss and the introduction of non-native fishes," said Manuel Ulibarri, manager of Willow Beach hatchery. "Dams altered water temperature and inundated habitats necessary for survival. Those razorbacks that do spawn in the wild are at a disadvantage because of carp and other non-native fishes that eat the eggs. The net result is a severely depleted native stock of mostly very old fish."

The oldest razorback suckers living in the wild probably hatched during the Eisenhower Administration. These fish live a long time—up to 45 years—but presently without successful natural reproduction. Old fish make up most of the population, which gets smaller and smaller by the year.

"Fully 90 percent of the world's razorback sucker population occurs in Lake Mojave," said Dr. Chuck Minckley of the Service's Arizona Fishery Resources Office. "That translates to a small number of fish in a small area. Our annual round-up helps us manage for a wild population that is increasingly becoming older."

Rounding up Razorbacks to Conserve a Species (continued)



Ancient but not extinct. Stocks of razorback suckers have been severely depleted by habitat loss and non-native fish. The Service is helping to bring this ancient fish back to the lower Colorado River. FWS photo.

In Lake Mojave this spring, biologists collected 80 razorback suckers in waters between Willow Beach NFH and Hoover Dam. Those fish yielded 300,000 larvae that will be stocked throughout the Colorado River system when they are larger. Cutting-edge captive breeding techniques such as sperm cryopreservation and egg storage ensure diverse genetic material for future generations of razorbacks.

Most of the young razorbacks are grown in predator-free waters for about 18 months, until they reach about 10 inches. At that time biologists tag and release them to face the rigors of the wild.

Downstream from Willow Beach, in Lake Havasu, biologists collected 38 adult razorbacks, all but one of which had been tagged. That's a clear indication that repatriated razorbacks are surviving. Minckley estimates that about 9,000 adult fish remain in the wild at Lake Mojave and Lake Havasu, with an additional 3,000 to 4,000 repatriates.

"When things get too rough in the wild because of man's actions, man has the responsibility to step in and take corrective actions," Minckley said. "If we didn't, razorbacks would go extinct."

Craig L. Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Defining "Wildlife First"

It felt like the second coming of the "Keystone spirit," according to participants in the first-ever national meeting of refuge biologists, held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

The May conference, *Fulfilling the "Wildlife First" Promise*, gathered refuge biologists from every state to promote consistent, science-based management in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Attendees also continued implementing provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and *Fulfilling the Promise*, the refuge system vision document that resulted from the 1998 Keystone, Colorado, refuge system conference.

Participants found a lot to like during the weeklong gathering.

"You could spend three lifetimes as a refuge biologist and still have a lot to learn," said Mara Weisenberger from San Andres National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. "The chance to share experiences with people from Alaska to Puerto Rico is a special opportunity."

Rod Krey, refuge supervisor for Oklahoma and Texas, agreed.

"This conference is an opportunity to explore commonalities of refuges throughout the nation," he said, adding that it was good to see a larger-than-usual number of young faces in the sessions.

Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark got the meeting started on an encouraging and unifying note.

"We've brought you together at NCTC this week for the sake of your refuges... but also for the benefit of your professional growth," Clark told the gathered biologists. "The tools and the training you will receive will help you grow professionally and will empower you to realize your hopes for the future of your refuge."

During the various workshops, participants explored issues such as integrating science into refuge planning and management, wilderness, and ecological integrity.



Wildlife first. Caring for wildlife and their habitat is a primary mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. FWS photo: Steve Hillebrand.

They also heard updates on a variety of forthcoming refuge system policies. As they strolled from classroom to classroom, participants perused displays and considered sign-up sheets calling for volunteers for committees that will tackle recommendations in *Fulfilling the Promise*.

It wasn't all science and policy, however. Late night sessions in the Commons lounge, early morning birdwalks along the Potomac and a slide show from noted refuge photographer Karen Hollingsworth helped round out the experience. On the opening day, many took a moment to pay their respects to their colleagues at the dedication of the Fallen Comrades Memorial (see article, page 24).

All who participated came away from the biologists' meeting richer in experience and knowledge.

"The week was a great learning and sharing experience for so many," said Elizabeth Souheaver, branch chief for Wildlife Resources in the Division of Refuges and a chief organizer of the workshop. "I'm looking forward to the next one."

Eric Eckl, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

International Migratory Bird Day Showcases the Power of Partnerships

Nature marks the passage of time with many memorable moments—the first snow, the turning of the autumn leaves, the first flowers of spring. But nothing announces the advent of spring in the Northern Hemisphere like the arrival of millions of migratory birds from their winter homes in Latin America and the Caribbean.

And in what has become as regular and exciting as the spring migration of the birds, thousands of people gathered at events in the United States, Canada and Mexico throughout May to celebrate the 8th annual International Migratory Bird Day, officially designated as May 13.

In Washington, D.C., Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark joined Mayor Anthony A. Williams at the National Zoo to kick off a festival in celebration of migratory bird conservation.

The festival featured interactive displays, special appearances by costumed characters and live birds of prey, Latin American food vendors, and games, arts, and crafts, providing a fun way to learn more about bird watching, habitat requirements for migratory birds, and how citizens can protect and support birds in their own backyards.

Thanks to an agreement with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the National Zoo was one of nearly 100 zoos and aquariums to host an International Migratory Bird Day event.

At the Washington, D.C., event, Director Clark pointed to successful peregrine falcon recovery—the theme of this year's migratory bird day—as an example of how partnerships among citizens, wildlife agencies and conservation organizations can make a difference for birds. She also noted that the District of Columbia has taken action to help both birds and people by cleaning and landscaping city parks and working to restore the Anacostia River.

"International Migratory Bird Day recognizes conservation partnerships like those that made the peregrine's recovery possible. I'm proud to join Mayor Williams and the District in their efforts to make our nation's capital a bird-friendly city," Clark said.



Great view. Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark, foreground, led the flock during a bird watch in the National Zoo. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.

At Zoo Atlanta, volunteers helped children make bird feeders and complete other fun hands-on projects and some 4,000 visitors snapped up Service posters and coloring books—and donned the ever-popular wash-off bald eagle tattoos.

In addition to zoo and aquarium events, International Migratory Bird Day observations were held at dozens of national wildlife refuges, national parks and national forests, as well as city and state parks, bird sanctuaries and other nature reserves across the country.

In the Southeast, where migratory bird day celebrations continue to grow in popularity, Regional Director Sam Hamilton hosted an event in New Orleans with Mayor Marc Morial, drawing children from several local school parishes. The City of New Orleans and the Service last year signed an Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds (see article in July/August 1999 *Fish & Wildlife News*).

At Ash Meadows NWR in North Carolina, visitors and youths from local Mini 4-H and Boy and Girl scout troops helped to band and release more than seventy songbirds, including such beauties as the common yellowthroat, Lazuli bunting, and Wilson's, yellow and MacGillivray's warblers.

Biologist David St. George supervised as part of the refuge's Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship project. This is the fourth year that Ash Meadows has hosted this banding demonstration as part of International Migratory Bird Day.

Migratory bird celebrations are popular in the West, too, where Stillwater NWR Complex in Fallon, Nevada, co-sponsored a three-day Spring Wings Bird Festival. Billed as an exaltation of the spring migration through the Lahontan Valley of western Nevada, Spring Wings featured tours of local bird observation hotspots, workshops, activities for children and a nature-related trade and art show. This increasingly popular festival draws birders from as far away as Illinois and Wisconsin to the unique wetlands and high desert habitat in and around Fallon.

Elsewhere in Region 1, the Friends of the Tualatin River NWR, working with community members and the Service, coordinated the Oregon refuge's fourth annual celebration of migratory songbirds, a special family-oriented festival that invited people to visit the urban refuge, which is not yet open to the public on a regular basis.

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International Migratory Bird Day (continued)



Running wild. Sound asleep, Harold crossed the finish line ahead of his mom and was declared the winner of the Region 7 Wild Run. FWS photo: Ron Laubenstein.

Local organizations and agencies sponsored educational exhibits and displays, and the celebration featured a variety of interactive activities designed get people out into nature. Adults and children went on bird walks led by Service biologists, took canoe trips guided by the Tualatin Riverkeepers or built birdhouses. Members of the Friends group gave tours of newly restored wetlands and recently acquired refuge properties.

In Region 6, Utah's Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and Friends of the Bear River Bird Refuge kicked off their International Migratory Bird Day celebration May 13 with an art contest for local school children. More than 500 children from kindergarten through 5th grade submitted entries depicting a variety of birds. Ninety of those children got to draw their entries on large banners which were hung on Main Street in Brigham City.

Later, at refuge headquarters, wildlife artists and conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited set up educational booths, and celebrants took scenic train tours of the refuge. Volunteers conducted workshops on outdoor photography, beginning birding and wildlife sketching, and refuge staff reported that more than 500 visitors flocked to the refuge throughout the day.

And far away in Anchorage, Alaska, two dozen Service employees and partners continued a seven-year tradition, dishing up a delightful and satisfying International Migratory Bird Day event at a scenic public park—complete with exhibits, face painting for children, live raptors, and a 3-K “Wild Run,” in which runners tested their knowledge of nature at stops along the course.

The event also featured the release of four rehabilitated bald eagles by representatives of Ducks Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, who bid on the chance to release an eagle in contests earlier in the year, and one very surprised Wild Run participant who had been selected at random to send the eagles back into the wild.

Compiled by Chris Tollefson, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

A Little Resourcefulness Goes a Long Way

On the highways and byways of natural resource conservation, a little resourcefulness—and an eye for possibilities—can go a long way.

Erich Langer, the Service's outreach coordinator for Oklahoma, proved this theory last spring on a routine trip to the Defense Reutilization Material Office, a surplus supply warehouse at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City.

No stranger to the first-come, first-served policy at the massive warehouse, Langer arrived during a thunderstorm and sloshed through the maze of rusty office furniture, dead lawnmowers, missile parts, wrecked vehicles and scrap metal in hopes of finding a hidden gem. Then, something caught his attention.

In the far corner stood a 1944 British double-decker bus. Like lightning, possibilities flashed before Langer's eyes—guided nature tours, birding tours and refuge tours could be enhanced with this bus. He had to have it.

Only a few weeks later, the bus was a hot commodity. Attending an outdoors festival in Cherokee, Oklahoma—the annual Selenite Crystal Digging/Celebration of Birds Festival in which Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge plays a starring role—Langer mentioned the bus to one of the festival's coordinators. She immediately saw potential for the bus as transport for festival-goers.

Langer found another use for the bus the very next day—supporting an important new Service partnership program in the Southwest region. Eighty miles from Cherokee, in Buffalo, Oklahoma, Tom Lucas, a Service partner who works on the High Plains Partnership, was preparing for a ranch conversation the very next day.

Refuge Centennial Legislation Advances on Capitol Hill



All aboard. What does this 1940s British double-decker bus have to do with conservation in the High Plains? FWS photo.

Ranch conversations are the first outreach efforts of a multi-agency partnership known as the High Plains Partnership for Species at Risk. The idea behind ranch conversations is to promote open dialogue with landowners about conserving habitat for the lesser prairie chicken, a candidate species for the Endangered Species list.

The High Plains Partnership works with landowners and other stakeholders to improve range conditions and habitat to conserve declining species such as the lesser prairie chicken and the black-tailed prairie dog.

The focus of the ranch conversation has shifted toward raising awareness, funds, and the potential for developing ecotourism to support local economies. Proposed activities included prairie chicken viewings like the one that Langer took early that morning—an 80-mile drive between Cherokee and Buffalo.

Ranch conversation coordinators used a yellow schoolbus to conduct viewings of lesser prairie chickens for ranchers with chicken habitat on their property. As he clambered on board the yellow bus for the early morning tour, Langer knew his double-decker could be put to good use, too.

“I think it might be a nice way to get people interested in the lesser prairie chicken,” Langer told Tom Lucas.

As it turns out, Langer’s statement is true, and his vision for the eight-ton bus with original spiral staircase up front may ultimately be realized. In fact, the 80-mile drive between Cherokee and Buffalo may be a regular route for the double-decker.

Regardless of future use, Langer’s bus already has quite a history. In 1986, the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce bought the bus and fixed it up with the intention of donating it to Tinker Air Force base, the state’s largest employer. Tinker converted the diesel engine into a compressed clean-running natural gas efficient machine in 1996.

After Langer claimed the bus at the warehouse, Tom Lucas convinced the Vocational Educational Training Center in Woodward, Oklahoma, to store the bus, insure it and have students maintain it.

That is not to say there have not been obstacles. A forklift operator at the Defense Reutilization Material Office speared the transmission, rendering the bus temporarily undriveable. Then, a towtruck assigned to bring the bus 150 miles from Tinker to the Vocational Educational Training Center broke down itself and required towing.

But, as the saying goes, good things are hard to come by. Today, the bus is co-owned by the Service with assistance from the High Plains Partnership and the vocational center, and will be used on a reserve basis for ecotourism purposes and other wildlife related activities.

*Ben Ikenson, External Affairs,
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Legislation to strengthen and promote the National Wildlife Refuge System for its 100th birthday in 2003 made steady progress towards the President’s desk in late July.

New Hampshire Senator Bob Smith introduced his version, the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commemoration Act of 2000, on July 17; the bill passed Environment and Public Works Committee markup on July 26. Companion legislation introduced by Representative Jim Saxton passed the House of Representatives July 11 by a vote of 403-15.

The Senate and House version of the bills are similar. Both bills recognize the importance of the centennial of the founding of the first refuge at Pelican Island, Florida, in 1903, and both establish a commission of high-ranking officials and distinguished citizens to carry out commemorative activities, host a refuge system conference, and secure new resources and partnerships for the system.

Additionally, the bills call for the Department of the Interior to develop a long-range plan to deal with the refuge system’s operations, maintenance and construction needs.

The Senate version of the bill also asks the President to proclaim 2003 the “Year of Wildlife Refuge.”

Smith, who is chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, praised the refuge system and lauded the legislation.

“From its humble beginnings on Pelican Island, Florida, nearly a century ago, the National Wildlife Refuge System has evolved into the most comprehensive system of lands devoted to wildlife protection and management in the world,” he said. “I am sure that few could imagine at that time that this simple act by President Theodore Roosevelt would create a conservation legacy that will endure for generations to come.”

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Refuge Centennial Legislation

(continued)

"The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Commemoration Act celebrates the legacy of our refuge lands, and I am pleased to play a part in this effort," Smith said.

On the House side, Congressman Saxton emphasized the importance of the legislation to the future of the refuge system.

"There is much work to be done to reach the goal of having a fully operational refuge system by 2003," Saxton said at a hearing on the bill shortly before its passage in the House.

Saxton called recent budget increases for the refuge system a "down payment" on the rising backlog of unmet operations and maintenance needs.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt hailed the bill as landmark legislation when he transmitted the Administration's original version to Congress in April.

"The bill celebrates the occasion of the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial, strengthens one of our most important conservation tools, and promotes understanding and appreciation of these natural treasures," Babbitt wrote. "With its passage, America's National Wildlife Refuge System will be poised for its second century and a stronger legacy for generations to come."

*Eric Eckl, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

Centennial Campaign Under Way

After sorting through suggestions from hundreds of Service employees, the National Wildlife Refuge System Outreach Team launched the Centennial Campaign outlining special outreach projects to carry out between now and the system's 100th birthday in 2003.

Among projects Service employees ranked highest:

- a celebrity public service announcement series
- a commemorative postage stamp series
- coordinated special events at refuges across the country
- a conference on the National Wildlife Refuge System
- a volunteer recruitment and enhancement initiative
- new Internet partnerships

■ exhibits targeting travelers in transportation hotspots

■ a commemorative calendar

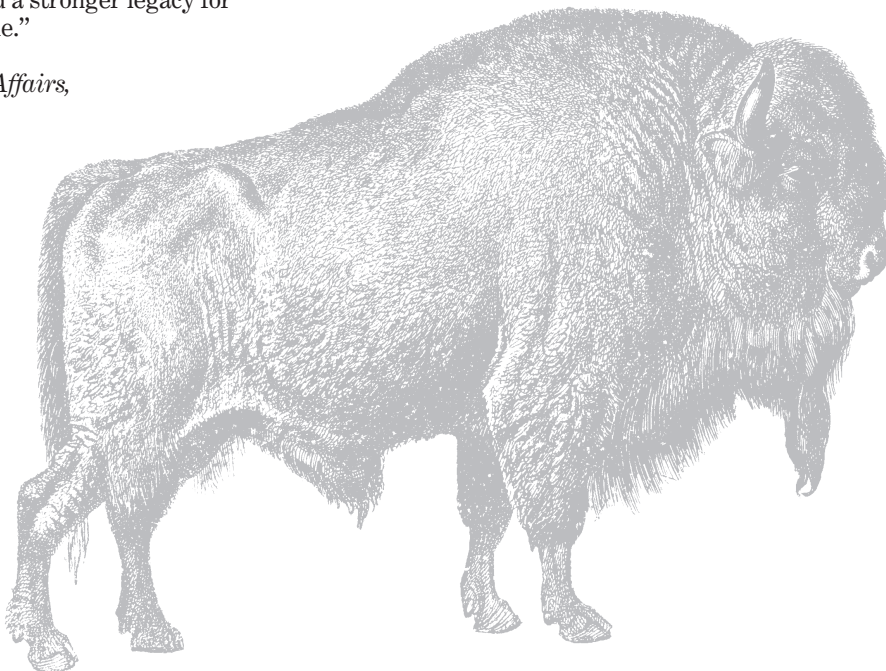
The outreach team will make special efforts to reach beyond traditional audiences to a broader cross-section of the American public.

Jim Kurth, deputy chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System and chair of the outreach team, thanked employees for their comments and suggestions.

"The ideas were invaluable as we reviewed all of the possibilities to use the centennial to reach out and encourage the American public to discover the beauty and diversity of their refuge system," Kurth said.

Eric Eckl

Information on the centennial legislation and outreach campaign is available from the Division of Refuges. Contact Janet Tennyson at 703/358-2363 or by e-mail at janet_tennyson@fws.gov.



Waterfowl Art Bridges a Gap

Waterfowl art has sparked a connection between students living half a world apart.

This creative connection was made through a unique international exchange program developed by Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and the Organization Promoting Everlasting Neighbors, a “sister city” program promoting cultural relationships between Newton, Iowa, and Smila, in the Ukrainian state of Cherkasy.

As part of the program, artwork from Iowa’s 1999 Junior Duck Stamp Contest was recently displayed in the Ukraine. In exchange, Ukrainian students sent artwork from their Lake and River Bird Contest for display in Iowa. Although similar to the Duck Stamp competition, the Ukrainian contest includes all water birds that occur naturally in Ukraine.

Both the Iowan and Ukrainian paintings and drawings are now on display at Neal Smith NWR near Prairie City, Iowa.

This international art exchange began with a conversation between Neal Smith refuge manager Nancy Gilbertson, who coordinates the Iowa Junior Duck Stamp contest, and OPEN’s Marvin Campbell.

“Nancy and I were viewing the 1999 Iowa Junior Duck Stamp art display and I asked her ‘How would you like to see this hanging in Ukraine?’” Campbell said.

With Gilbertson’s support, Campbell sought permission from the young Iowa waterfowl artists and Ukrainian officials to display the artwork in Ukraine.

The Iowa waterfowl art soon found an appreciative new audience of Ukrainian students and artists at Cherkasy Oblast Art Museum. Next, the artwork was featured as a traveling exhibit throughout Cherkasy. On May 12, the Iowa art returned home, going on display—along with the Ukrainian art—at Neal Smith NWR.



Cross-culture. *One of the paintings created by students in the Ukraine and displayed at Neal Smith NWR. FWS photo: Therese Klauke.*

Although 1999 was only the first year of a planned two-year partnership between the Service and OPEN, the program has already generated enthusiasm and served as a catalyst to further cross-cultural education.

Gilbertson said she thinks the first-time exchange benefitted everyone involved.

“We know wildlife and environmental issues today are international or global in scope, so a general appreciation of the wildlife issues in other countries can only bode well for the future,” she said.

The Ukrainian students’ art will be on display at Neal Smith NWR and locations throughout Iowa until this fall when it will be returned to Cherkasy along with the 2000 Iowa Junior Duck Stamp art for another Ukrainian tour.

*Dan Sobieck, External Affairs,
Ft. Snelling, Minnesota*

United States Plays Vital Role In CITES Conference

At the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), held in April in Nairobi, Kenya, the 151 member nations approved measures to enhance the protection and conservation of whales, elephants and sea turtles.

CITES is an international agreement designed to control and regulate global trade in certain wild animals and plants that are or may be threatened with extinction as a result of commercial trade.

Led by Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Donald Barry and composed of a number of Service representatives, the U.S. delegation successfully took a lead role in the occasionally tense negotiations, facilitating development of new agreements to help strengthen trade protections for musk deer, Tibetan antelope, bears, sturgeon, tigers, and other imperiled species.

Barry pronounced the conference a success from the United States’ perspective.

“This was the ninth COP for CITES I’ve attended and I would be hard pressed to think of a past conference where the United States did so well,” Barry said, assessing the results of the two-week meeting. “Not only did we accomplish our objectives for the big, high profile species like whales, elephants, and sea turtles, but we reestablished our leadership role within the international conservation community as a whole.”

In fact, the U.S. delegation may have felt a little overwhelmed at times with its prominent role in the negotiations.

At one frantic point during the conference, the United States had been asked to serve on each of six working groups that had been established simultaneously to work out compromises on difficult issues, and to chair three of them. CITES members also elected the United States to chair the standing committee—the permanent executive body of countries that runs CITES between the biennial conferences.

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United States Plays Vital Role In CITES Conference (continued)

“This was the ultimate international barometric reading of the high regard held for the U.S. delegation at this conference,” Barry said. “The United States intends to remain a world leader on endangered species trade issues under CITES.”

After reaching a compromise with Kenya and India, South African countries withdrew their proposals to reopen the ivory trade, giving the countries more time to improve systems for monitoring poaching and illegal trade. The Service, under the U.S. African Elephant Conservation Fund, provides financial assistance for these monitoring systems.

In other action, conference delegates re-confirmed that the International Whaling Commission is the primary international body responsible for managing whales, and turned down proposals for international trade in whale products. Delegates also rejected Cuba's proposal to trade its valuable stockpile of hawksbill turtle shells to Japan.

*Patricia Fisher, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

*Susan S. Lieberman, Office of Management
Authority, Arlington, Virginia*

Account Will Help Fire Victims' Children

A savings account has been established for the fish culturist and his wife who died in a May house fire at Quinault NFH. Lloyd Smith and his wife Rhonda lived in a residence at the Washington State hatchery with their three children, who were not home at the time of the fire. The children, James, 10; Reuben, 8; and Miranda, 3, are staying with grandparents. Donations for the Smith children can be mailed to the James, Reuben and Miranda Smith Fund, Bank of Gray's Harbor, P.O. Box 236, Pacific Beach, Washington 98561. The cause of the fire is unknown; because the hatchery is a federal facility and located on a tribal reservation, the FBI is investigating, along with Quinault tribal police and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Hatcheries Help Improve Paddlefish Populations

Paddlefish have captured the imagination of ancient conquistadores and modern-day corporate executives.

Fossils show that this primitive big-river behemoth has been around since before dinosaurs ruled—and conservation efforts by national fish hatcheries will ensure that they continue to be a vital part of the Mississippi River ecosystem in the future.

Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto was the first to document paddlefish on his 1542 Mississippi River foray. Early ichthyologists thought they were a new species of shark—a freshwater shark. Not true, though like sharks they do lack a bony skeleton.

In 1932, the owner of Allis-Chalmers farm implements company, himself an amateur ichthyologist, offered a \$1,000 reward to the person who could bring him a young paddlefish—at the time a rarity. That prize went unclaimed and the fish's reproductive ritual remained a mystery until 1960, when a Missouri biologist was eyewitness to a paddlefish spawning.

Biologists have since learned much about this species, sometimes called a spoonbill catfish, and have also seen it decline as a result of habitat loss, excessive commercial harvest for roe, and dams halting migration to spawning habitat.

Declines were so severe that some states closed fishing for the species. Now, across the Mississippi basin, Service national fish hatcheries are working quite successfully with state fish and game agencies to turn the trend around.

With the help of the states and the Service's fishery resources offices and fish health centers, hatchery biologists spawn wild fish, rear the offspring at the hatcheries, and stock the young back into their parental waters. Often, biologists stock paddlefish above dams, in some cases bringing the species back to waters where they had been absent for years.

Last year, 5,400 12-inch paddlefish from three Service hatcheries, Uvalde and Inks Dam in Texas and Tishomingo in Oklahoma, made their way into Lake Texoma—the first time in nearly 50 years that paddlefish swam above Denison Dam on the Red River, the natural border between the two states.

“It's pretty important that we replenish paddlefish in the Red River, not only above Denison Dam, but throughout the Red,” said Kerry Graves, Tishomingo's manager. “The dam blocked spawning runs, so the Red River population is down without that access to spawning habitat upstream.”

For continuity, the parent stock is composed of Red River fish from below Denison Dam.

“We're keeping the same strain of paddlefish in the same river basin,” said David Oviedo, Uvalde's manager. “To get paddlefish numbers up to what they should be, this has to be a long-term effort.”

It might, however, be a lot of work. It was slim pickings this spring finding ready Red River paddlefish. Fortunately, biologists at Natchitoches NFH in Louisiana spawned enough Red River fish to fill a void. Inks Dam, Uvalde and Tishomingo split among themselves 82,000 fry that will ultimately go back into the Red River.

Since the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation allows paddlefish fishing, once they are established in and above Lake Texoma, paddlefish could occupy—at least on a seasonal basis—more than 220 miles of river flowing into the lake.

Yet Another Cormorant Incident



In good hands. National fish hatcheries and their partners are helping to restore paddlefish. FWS photo: Natchitoches NFH.

Successes like this one are mounting (see sidebar). Paddlefish have already been restored to waters above dams on the Verdigris and Arkansas rivers in Kansas and Oklahoma. What were twelve-inchers a few years ago now weigh more than 75 pounds and measure five feet long. In the next decade anglers can expect these new residents to reach 100 pounds.

It can be a long-distance affair when rising rivers in spring trigger paddlefish to spawn. Unimpeded by dams, they move upwards of 200 miles in a month to find the right habitat—and national fish hatcheries and their partners will continue to play a vital role in conserving this truly unique fish.

Craig L. Springer, Division of Fisheries, Albuquerque, New Mexico

More Paddlefish Restoration

Here's a brief round up of what national fish hatcheries are doing for paddlefish restoration across the central United States.

■ **Mammoth Spring NFH** in Arkansas rears paddlefish from eggs to nearly 20 inches. Last fall, they stocked 40,000 young paddlefish into the White River system above Beaver Reservoir.

■ In South Dakota, **Gavins Point NFH** focuses on the upper Missouri River, working with state fish biologists from Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. Gavins Point stocks 25,000 18-inch long paddlefish each year into Lake Francis Case. The adult fish they spawn are upwards of 100 pounds, shedding about 5,000 eggs per pound. These tagged fish are returning to the angler's creel.

■ **Neosho NFH** in Missouri, incubates up to 700,000 eggs and fry each year. Because of cold water temperature, this facility sends the young fish to other hatcheries to get them on feed.

■ Biologists from **Natchitoches NFH** spawn paddlefish from Louisiana's Mermentau River, producing about 500,000 fry a year. Booker Fowler State Fish Hatchery gets about 100,000 fry and the remaining lot is split among Natchitoches, Mammoth Spring and Private John Allen national fish hatcheries.

■ **Private John Allen NFH** plays an important role in paddlefish restoration in Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Louisiana, and in its own state, Mississippi. The hatchery planted more than 40,000 paddlefish in the Cumberland River of Tennessee, a population that is now considered well on its way to being restored.

Craig L. Springer

In May, Service biologists discovered what appeared to be a massive slaughter of nesting double-crested cormorants on Little Charity Island in Michigan's Saginaw Bay.

Law enforcement officers from the Service, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and the State of Michigan estimated that more than 500 nesting birds were killed—approximately half of the island's breeding population.

Agents are collecting and examining evidence as part of a criminal investigation. Preliminary findings indicate the birds were shot at their nesting sites, many while incubating eggs or brooding young. Dead birds littered the 5.4-acre island, which is part of Michigan Islands NWR. Agents reported that many of the birds appeared to have been killed while sitting on their nests, and others were found dead on the ground.

Service agents said it is reasonable to assume that additional birds were wounded and died outside the immediate area. Additionally, they said they expect to see the deaths of many orphaned young cormorants that are generally unable to care for themselves until sometime in August.

This is the second large-scale cormorant slaughter in two years. In July 1998, more than 950 double-crested cormorants were found shot on New York's Little Galloo Island on Lake Ontario.

Once common in the Great Lakes, double-crested cormorants were devastated by the effects of toxic chemicals in the 1960s and a mere 125 nesting pairs remained in the Great Lakes by 1973. In recent years cormorant populations have increased dramatically as a result of bans on toxic pesticides such as DDT, federal protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and abundant food resources.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects migratory birds from being hunted, captured or killed, as well as protecting nests and eggs. Under the act, killing cormorants, or any migratory birds, without a permit is subject to a \$5,000 fine and/or six months imprisonment. In most states, including Michigan, state laws also protect cormorants.

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Yet Another Cormorant Incident (continued)

The Service has established rewards for information leading to the identification and apprehension of anyone associated with the killings.

Responding to increasing concerns about the possible effect of double-crested cormorant populations on recreational fishing, habitat and other migratory birds, the Service is currently developing a comprehensive cormorant management plan that will address biological issues and impacts associated with cormorant populations.

Bob Lamadue, Division of Law Enforcement, Bay City, Michigan

Emphasis on SAFETY. At the invitation of the Menominee Tribal Conservation Department, the Service in Region 3 recently trained 70 tribe members in hunter safety using the Simulated Action Firearm Education Training for Youth (SAFETY) system, a high-tech firearm simulator. Instructors use the system—available at no cost to certified state and tribal firearm safety and education programs—to add realism to hunter safety classes. The Service purchased the SAFETY system through the Wildlife Restoration Program, which receives funds from excise taxes on hunting licenses, firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. The Menominee Indian Tribe is the first tribe to use this innovative hunter education system. Text by John Leonard, External Affairs, Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. FWS photo: Ed Spoon.



Three Nations Discuss Wildlife Issues

South Padre Island, Texas, served as the backdrop this winter for the fifth annual meeting of the Canada/Mexico/United States Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management.

The committee reached agreement on a number of wildlife issues of interest to all three nations, including continued cooperation on the landmark new North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Former Service Deputy Director John Rogers headed the U.S. delegation, joined by Felipe Ramirez Ruiz de Velasco, director general of the Mexican Wildlife Agency, and Robert McClean, director of wildlife for the Canadian Wildlife Service. More than 85 representatives from all three nations' governments, state wildlife agencies and non-government organizations discussed topics of mutual concern including migratory birds and wetlands; law enforcement; biodiversity; and sustainable use.

Among agreements reached at the meeting:

- The Impact of Pesticides on Seabirds working group, composed of national wildlife agency specialists and partners, will determine the scope of pesticides' impacts on seabirds and propose an international implementation strategy and time frame for solving the problem.

- The committee will continue to work with the Commission on Environmental Cooperation and North American Bird Conservation Initiative committees to develop a workshop or take other action to protect grasslands, an ecosystem that includes several priority shared species.

The trilateral committee was established in 1996 to consolidate several cooperative wildlife and plant conservation efforts throughout North America.

Ellen Murphy, International Affairs, Arlington, Virginia

Fee Program Draws Badly-Needed Dollars



Sir, your entrance fee, please? *This Canada goose knows the right way to get into "Ding" Darling NWR. FWS photo.*

Wildlife lovers who visit J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Sanibel Island will have an improved experience in the near future when interpreters set out along the refuge's famed wildlife drive in new visitor- and environmentally-friendly electric golf carts, purchased with entry fee dollars collected through the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program.

"Ding" Darling is one of a number of refuges and national fish hatcheries that have begun raising money through this Congressionally-authorized program that allows the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service to collect fees at facilities nationwide. Agencies may keep all of the fee demonstration project revenues.

Combined Service revenue from the program for fiscal year 1999 was \$3.6 million, at least 80 percent of which stays on site to maintain boat docks and ramps, auto tour routes, trails, information kiosks, exhibits, signs, brochures... and golf carts. Refuge managers say this income is particularly welcome considering the rapidly increasing backlog of unmet maintenance and operations needs for the refuge system—now approaching \$800 million.

Volunteers Enjoy Pea Island Refuge Through Workamping

Thirty-one national wildlife refuges in 19 states participate in the program. Most charge fees of \$3 to \$5 per vehicle and \$1 to \$3 per walk-in visitor or bicyclist. Several hatcheries also participate.

The fees do not appear to be discouraging visitors. In fact, visitation at Service sites charging fees has grown faster than at refuges and hatcheries in general. Surveys conducted at fee demonstration sites indicate that a solid majority of the public supports the fees, especially when they learn that the money remains on the refuge or hatchery.

"People tend to value what they pay for, so fees are more than just a new source of revenue—they help build public appreciation for the resource," said Lori Jones, national fee coordinator for the Division of Refuges.

"Ding" Darling Refuge Manager Lou Hinds agreed, and said the improvements paid for with fee demonstration revenue help visitors have a better refuge experience.

"We've found that the public is much more likely to approach interpreters in golf carts than in private vehicles, so investing in two more is a way to use entrance-fee dollars to improve visitor service," he said.

"Our refuge collects more than \$315,000 each year in entry fees," Hinds added. "Having this program allows me to think beyond what I'm doing now, and to make plans for our public visitation for the future."

The Senate has included a provision in the Interior Appropriations bill extending the authority to collect fees under the program for an additional year, through 2002. The authority to use fees generated under the program has also been extended, from 2004 to 2005. Senator Bob Graham (D) of Florida has introduced legislation to make the program permanent.

*Eric Eckl, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

The small ad in *Workamper* magazine asked for 32 hours of work per week in exchange for a campsite. It didn't give the specifics, but since it was for a national wildlife refuge on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, we were intrigued. That's how my husband and I ended up at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

We have been traveling full time in a fifth-wheel trailer for 4 years, stopping occasionally to workamp at state and national forests, parks, refuges and recreational areas. While workamping, campers put in set number of hours each week—generally between 20 and 40 hours per couple, for two to six months—in exchange for a campsite with electricity and water hookups.

Free propane, laundry, e-mail services and passes to local attractions are among some of the benefits we've enjoyed, though not all sites offer such things. Among the perks at Pea Island NWR were a beautiful natural setting and friendly people.

Among our workamping experiences, we've cleaned campsites at Lake Placid, New York, and conducted horse and buggy tours in Pennsylvania's Amish country. But nothing prepared us for the unique experience of workamping on a refuge—certainly not one as diverse as Pea Island, which is administered, along with Alligator River NWR, from a single office in Manteo, North Carolina, midway between the two refuges.

Named for the dune peas that are a source of protein for migrating tundra swans, snow geese and other visitors, Pea Island is a 14-mile long refuge for tens of thousands of migrating birds, waterfowl, and small mammals. Situated between Pamlico Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, it is located within the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

When we started at Pea Island, we didn't know the difference between a tundra swan and a stilt and we were by no means prepared to see—up close and personal—loggerhead turtles washed up on the beach. Books, films, videos and willing Service staffers taught us about the birds; we learned about the turtles from biologists whose attitudes and professionalism show how deeply they care about the wildlife they protect and how much they know and do.

It was a jolt to see the sheer delight in the eyes of a birder who had just seen an unusual split-tailed kite. It was exciting to hear an old-timer say thanks for a magnificent bird walk and recall the 1930's, before the land was preserved for migratory birds. And it was with a daily sense of awe that we met the volunteers who travel as much as 120 miles round trip to staff the busy visitor center every day.

Getting to know refuge volunteer coordinator and interpretative specialist Bonnie Strawser was one of the highlights of our experience. Strawser established a college internship program 20 years ago and last year added workamping to the volunteer program at Pea Island. We got caught up in her energy, often putting in more than the required 32 hours per week.

Learning more about wildlife conservation took the majority of our time. We also participated in a wolf howl and turtle patrols, and took bird walks and canoe trips, all offered at the refuge.

We lamented the fact that getting to a supermarket required a 50-mile round trip and we couldn't get a daily newspaper delivered but we chalked the inconveniences up to the price we'd pay for the serenity and solitude of a refuge.

Workamping at Pea Island NWR was a learning experience and a labor of love. It offered us an opportunity to give back to the nation just a small part of what we have enjoyed. It gave us the chance to see the dedicated personnel who are the Service, and let us see just how serious they all are about their work.

Muriel J. Smith

Smith is a former editor with Forbes Newspapers and The Two River Times in New Jersey.

 The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service & Prince William Network

WildThings 2000!

Wading into Wetlands

October 4, 2000 • 12 noon - 1:30 PM ET • Grades 4 - 8

Grab your galoshes, throw away the remote and come *Wading into Wetlands* with us! What is *Wading into Wetlands*? It's a totally cool, live and interactive satellite and internet wetland happening! Don't miss this distance learning adventure.

Join Fish and Wildlife Service professionals on a quest to discover just what wetlands really are and why they are important. You will also learn about threats to wetlands and how to help save them in this live and interactive program for students in grades 4 through 8. This educational adventure is FREE. For more information about the program and how your class can participate, visit the Web site at: www.WildThings2000.org

Did you know that wetlands are the most productive habitats on earth??? These natural resources produce and sustain more biomass (that means living organisms) than forests or grasslands. AND did you know that one-third of the United State's threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands? Wow! Wetlands are amazing classrooms. So tune in October 4th as the Fish and Wildlife Service brings you this wet-n-wild adventure live from the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge.



Live from the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, California

Register on-line at: www.WildThings2000.org

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An Iranian Travel Journal

Tense with anticipation, I handed my passport to the Iranian Customs officer. Trying to enter Iran on a U.S. government passport when the two countries have had no formal diplomatic relations for the last 20 years suddenly didn't seem like such a good idea. The officer studied my documents closely and left his glass booth. Finally he reappeared, wrote something from my passport on a piece of paper, and stamped and initialed my documents.

I officially entered Iran—the first U.S. government employee to do so in more than two decades. I left Customs thinking, “Now that I'm in, what if I can't get out?”

I did get out eventually, but not before spending the next week with an international coalition of wildlife scientists, managers and administrators, mapping out a conservation plan to help save the endangered Siberian crane.

Some 50 participants from 9 Siberian crane range states and 7 international organizations and agencies met for the third time under the framework of the 1993 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species to review the conservation plan for Siberian cranes and to develop an annual work plan. We met in the historic Ramsar Hotel, site of the negotiation and signing of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971.

At times during my visit, I slipped back to another lifetime—30 years ago, when I lived in Iran as a Peace Corps volunteer...

I first arrived in the central Caspian city of Chalus, Iran, in early 1966 and was assigned to the local game and fish department office. I roamed east and west along the coastal plain, known as Iran's rice bowl, with the Caspian Sea on one side and the towering Alborz Mountain range on the other. This region of the country is unique with its abundant rainfall, high humidity and semi-tropical vegetation, in marked contrast to the better-known desert and semi-desert climate of the rest of the country.



Checking the lay of the land. Yuri Markin of Russia and Sarha Sorokin examine crane habitat in Fereidoonkamar, Iran. FWS photo: David A. Ferguson.

Iran serves as migratory and wintering grounds for hundreds of thousands of avian species from western Siberia. The Caspian littoral—with an abundance of water from the vast surface of the Caspian itself, two major lagoons, and myriad tiny, man-made water impoundments or *ab-bandans*—provided a perfect conditions for waterfowl. Part of my job as a Peace Corps volunteer with a wildlife background was to find these wetlands, document their characteristics and assess their importance to waterfowl.

I spent hours back then talking to farmers and duck trappers, sleeping in their hide houses at the edge of *ab-bandans*, and learning the tricks of the *damgah*, decoy ponds, clap traps and flight nets on dark and stormy nights—the best conditions for such ventures. It was like no other experience—a surreal ride through narrow channels of vegetation surrounded by sounds of ducks quacking, water rails screeching, and a hundred wings flapping as birds exploded off the water, circled overhead and landed again, uncertain of what spooked them in the first place.

Hunters rode fast-moving dugouts propelled by polesmen in the stern. One hunter sat cross-legged in the center of the craft softly beating a staccato on a brass gong that swung from side to side sending its bell-like ring bouncing off the vegetation in all directions. The other stood in the bow, masked behind a flickering, smoldering flame whose light shone ahead of the boat.

The lead hunter held a long-handled net and waited for the right moment to deftly snatch mesmerized ducks off the water or startled birds out of the air. Twisting their wings and legs with quick and smooth movements, the hunter dropped the ducks on the boat bottom, freeing his hands for their next quarry...

My thoughts abruptly leaped forward to the year 2000 as our flight from Tehran was about to land in the city of Rasht, capital of the Gilan Province.

Continued on page 20

An Iranian Travel Journal (continued)

The next day we got down to the matter at hand. Once thought to occur in a wide belt across Russian Siberia and migrate to south Asian countries from perhaps Turkey to China, the Siberian crane has lost numbers and suitable habitat. Today, they are reduced to three groups, together containing no more than 2,500 birds. The group that winters in Iran, with only 12 to 15 individuals, annually treks some 3,000 miles along the Caspian shore, through Azerbaijan, Russia and Kazakhstan, and then north to their Siberian breeding grounds east of the Ural Mountains in Russia.

During the meeting, we took a field trip to the southeast Caspian town of Fereidoon Kenar in Mazandaran Province, near the cranes' wintering grounds. Crane habitat there was confined to a relatively small area around privately-owned, flooded rice paddies and swamps where duck trapping occurs. I was surprised at the location, less than a mile from the town and just off the beaten track—which I had traversed in my former wetland-sleuthing days. We saw two crane pairs at this site during our field trip and concluded the site is critical habitat for the birds.

We returned to Ramsar to wrap up conservation plans for the "Sibes." Seven of the 9 range state representatives signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane. Originally adopted in 1993, the MOU recognizes that the western (Iran wintering) and central (India wintering) populations of the Siberian crane are at risk of extinction, and that the eastern population (wintering in China) is threatened. All states agreed to work closely for the improved conservation status of this species throughout its breeding, migrating and wintering range.

Dave Ferguson, Office of International Affairs, Arlington, Virginia

Celebrating Five Years of Wildlife Without Borders



Job well done. Retired Service Deputy Director John Rogers accepts an award for his efforts in cooperative conservation projects from Julia Carabias Lillo, the secretary of the environment for Mexico. DOI photo: Tami Heilemann.

During a May 19 event, Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark praised the efforts of the Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico program, a cooperative effort between the Service and the Mexican Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fisheries (SEMARNAP).

Representatives of the Service and the Mexican government gathered at the Mexican Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the successes the Service and Mexico have achieved through this five-year old program.

Also at the event, Mexican Secretary of the Environment Julia Carabias Lillo presented retired Service Deputy Director John Rogers with a plaque in recognition of his support for SEMARNAP and the Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico program over the past five years.

The Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico program was created to strengthen Mexico's capacity to address biodiversity conservation needs; promote the exchange of information and technology; support joint projects to conserve natural resources in both nations; and foster greater investment in resource management and conservation in Mexico.

Since its inception, Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico has supported more than 100 projects and trained nearly 6,000 people in wildlife conservation. Clark recognized a number of supporters, including SEMARNAP's Director of Wildlife Felipe Ramirez, and Armando Garcia, vice president for development at CEMEX, a multinational corporation that has been instrumental in international efforts to reintroduce several rare and endangered species back to their native habitat.

Clark also recognized Patricio Robles of Sierra Madre, a conservation organization that provided matching fund to produce the Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico five-year report, and Gabriel Sanchez, whose group, ALTERNARE, has trained 500 rural Mexican landowners on topics ranging from alternative energy to environmental education.

Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Deliberate Acts of Outreach

*Caught Red-handed and Dutifully
Reported by Anita Noguera, National
Outreach Coordinator*

“Mirror, mirror on the wall... Who has the best Web site of all?”

Even a magic mirror might have trouble filtering through the Internet to answer that question, but the National Outreach Team recently set out to see whether the Service’s Web site is the best it can be.

The Service’s site gets 15,000 to 20,000 hits per month. With nearly a quarter of a million customers visiting the “virtual Service” each year, it makes good business sense to ensure our Web site meets cyber-customers’ needs.

Before heading to their spring meeting in early June, outreach team members put www.fws.gov through its paces to see whether it is actively targeting the right audiences and to examine the content, looking at the site not as Service employees but as outside customers who were unfamiliar with the data and navigating the Web site. They used realistic scenarios such as planning a vacation on public lands in the West; searching for information about hunting, fishing and entrance fees on refuges; looking for federal law enforcement jobs; and trying to procure endangered species facts and educational products.

They began by using popular Internet search engines such as Yahoo, Infoseek, Altavista and Dogpile to find Service-related information without using the words “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service” in their key word search.

Not all search engines are created equal; the group found that using this method, Dogpile (<http://www.dogpile.com>) and GoTo (<http://www.goto.com>) fared best in pointing customers to Service Web pages, while Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>) and Altavista (<http://www.altavista.com>) seem to ignore Service sites. *(See sidebar for information on getting the most out of search engines)*

Next, team members tackled our Web site’s content to see if they could find the information to complete their inquiries. Most found what they needed and when they looked at the information with “visitor’s eyes,” they were pleased with the presentation, graphics and text. They did, however, find some room for improvement.

Though perhaps the Service’s Web site cannot be “everything to everyone,” the outreach team felt we could better anticipate customers’ needs by clustering information and tailoring navigation to target audiences such as hunters, anglers or birders. Other suggestions for improvement included keeping information current and accurate, and informing customers when they link to a site that they are leaving the Service’s Web page.

Many also felt that developing a more consistent design structure would improve the look and feel of the Service’s Web site.

Team members also checked to see how the Service’s site compares to other Web sites, visiting and grading sites of other federal agencies, state governments, small and large businesses, universities, and non-government agencies. They found the Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov>) to be a stand-out site with some terrific ideas to borrow, especially in the use of techniques to attract specific audiences.

The National Outreach Team will package its findings and present them to the Web Design Team, and both teams will work together this fall to improve the Service Web site.

All in all, the outreach team concluded that www.fws.gov looks pretty good—and with some work, the site will be well-positioned to evolve into one of the best federal sites on the Web.

The team’s suggestions, along with the June meeting notes, are on the Service’s Intranet at <http://sii.fws.gov/outreach/Notmeet5.htm>.

Let us hear from you...what can we do to our Web site to reach more customers and bring them back for more? Send your suggestions via e-mail to anita_noguera@fws.gov.

If You Promote It, They Will Come

Instead of paying search engine companies a fee to “advertise” our Web site—as many large companies do to guarantee their site will be listed at the top of the results of a search—Service Webmasters can use every tool in their arsenals to attract search engines to bring appropriate queries to our site—virtually for free.

This means adding the Service’s Web site address to printed materials such as bird lists, business cards, refuge brochures and news releases; mentioning the site in presentations; highlighting it on signs in visitor centers; and appending it to the bottom of all e-mail messages.

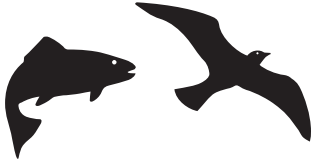
The objective is for the Service home page to make an impact on the first impression rather than serving primarily as a navigational tool.

An online tutorial on how to register a Web site at a search engine such as Yahoo is available on the Intranet at <http://sii.fws.gov/webpublish/train/trainregsearch.htm>.

With the help of the Web Design Team—a group of National Outreach Team members who are examining how the to re-design the Service home page to communicate the highest-priority messages to target audiences—the outreach team will investigate options for improving the Service’s search success rate.

Anita Noguera

Ecosystem Approach Initiatives



Service, Aquarium, Volunteers Team Up to Restore Refuge Salt Marsh

The Chesapeake Bay's receding tide lapped at the ankles of the volunteers as they made their way along the salt marsh planting bunches of smooth cordgrass at regular intervals. By the time the hot July sun reached its zenith and the volunteers broke for lunch, a broad expanse of barren sand had been transformed into a field of waving green and glistening white that would eventually be inhabited by myriad fish species.



For the resource. Volunteer Phil Cicconi explains the habitat restoration process to a local news crew as others continue planting. FWS photo: Eric Eckl.

"Salt marshes provide an important nursery for species such as rockfish and crabs, which in turn support other wildlife species and Chesapeake Bay fisheries," said Susan Talbott, outdoor recreation planner for Maryland's Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge. "But this marsh has been eroding because of a combination of wave action and sea level rise."

An opportunity to rebuild the eroding marsh came unexpectedly. John Gill, senior fish and wildlife biologist for the Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office, explained.

"When the Corps of Engineers came to the Service looking for a permit to dispose of clean dredge material, we saw an opportunity to experiment with an environmentally-friendly alternative to the traditional means of dredge disposal," Gill said.

The experiment also brought an opportunity for cooperation between two Service program areas. Eastern Neck NWR and the Chesapeake Bay Field Office, both members of the Chesapeake Bay/Susquehanna River Ecosystem Team, quickly reached an agreement with the Corps to use the dredged sand to bolster the salt marsh against erosion and to subsequently plant the area to improve the habitat value.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, also managed to get in on the undertaking. The aquarium will help train and equip volunteers to track one of the project's unique features—planting some portions of the intertidal zone in checkerboard patterns and other parts in continuous blocks. Volunteers will monitor which pattern grows to more closely resemble the tidal hummocks and rivulets that shelter juvenile fish in a natural saltmarsh.

“This is the beginning of a longer-term partnership that will continue for several years at Eastern Neck,” said Glenn Page, director of conservation at the aquarium and one of the architects of the project.

The volunteers didn't have to look far for inspiration—cordgrass patches planted nearby just weeks earlier were already teeming with small fish and crabs. They could hardly contain their excitement at this development.

“It just makes us feel good that we are giving something back in a tangible way. It makes us feel that a refuge owned by the United States really does belong to us,” said local resident Joan Hasselquist, secretary of the Friends of Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, which recruited many of the volunteers for the effort.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded portions of the effort through its Five Star Restoration Challenge Grant program, which supports community-based wetland restoration projects.

The Foundation's Malia Somerville, who administers more than 60 such grants in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, was on hand to see her grant dollars at work as the volunteers planted cordgrass. The formalities of applications and partnership agreements were far from her mind as she poked another cluster of cordgrass into the sand and gazed out over the sun-dappled waters of the bay.

“I was just so happy to get out of the office,” she confessed.

Besides serving as a model of teamwork, the project also garnered media attention. WJLA-TV, an ABC affiliate in Washington, D.C., had been looking for stories for a special “Celebrate the Bay” series it was running during its evening newscasts. When the station called looking for an event to film on short notice, the salt marsh restoration fit the bill perfectly.

Teamwork also saved the day for the WJLA camera crew when a gubernatorial press conference delayed them en route to the cord grass project site. The aquarium sent a boat to pick up the crew, saving an hour and enabling the crew to arrive on time and catch this cooperative work in progress.

*Eric Eckl, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*



Birds Socked By Carson Clark! *As part of an ongoing bittern research project at Minnesota's Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, biologists in the field are studying the life cycle of this shorebird. When they capture bitterns researchers place socks over the birds' heads to calm them. Baby socks work best, and the bird pictured above is draped in a sock formerly worn by Director Jamie Rappaport Clark's one-year-old son, Carson. Agassiz NWR manager Maggie Anderson is recycling infant clothing, and Carson Clark—with some help from his mom—has done his share to support this important project. FWS photo.*

Who's Who? Who Sits Where?

The September/October issue of *Fish and Wildlife News* will take a look at the new regional organizational structure. A special section will feature names and photographs of all regional directors, deputy regional directors, assistant regional directors and special assistants for ecosystems.

Exploring Our Past



Memorial to Fallen Service Employees Dedicated

On a sunny May morning in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, more than 300 Service employees paused for a moment of solemn silence, bowing their heads as a spring breeze gently carried the names of their colleagues skyward.

The list began with Edgar Albert Lindgren, a law enforcement officer killed by poachers in 1922, and ended about 10 minutes later with Kathleen Cheap and James M. "Mike" Callow, who died in a small plane crash while conducting a waterfowl survey less than two years ago.

The simple dedication ceremony was in keeping with the spirit of the Service's Fallen Comrades Memorial. Reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., the memorial consists of a curved stone wall with 59 names chiseled in dark gray slate, a few benches, and a pair of saplings that will eventually grow together to form an arch in the courtyard near the Commons building at the National Conservation Training Center.

"All the people on this wall perished in the line-of-duty, but the Fallen Comrades Memorial is not just about them. It is about all of us," Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark told the gathering. "What you find here might affect you in a way that gives this place personal meaning and significance to your life and to your work. If that happens, then you will know the things that truly make this place a memorial."

The ceremony affected those on the podium as deeply as it did those in the audience.

"I couldn't look up at the audience," said Maggie Anderson, manager at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge in northern Minnesota, one of six employees who read off the names during the ceremony. "I just kept thinking it could have been any one of them."

"I felt great pride and sadness in remembering a man who loved his refuge work," said Elizabeth Souheaver, one of the primary organizers of the event, whose husband Beau Sauselein, was killed in a wildfire at Florida's Merritt Island NWR in 1981. "He put in many long hours during that wildfire season, [and] I can remember him saying that he kept going simply because they needed him."

Designed by West Virginia artist Joe Mayer, the memorial had long been planned for the National Conservation Training Center. As the vision for the center evolved from a simple educational facility to a "home" for Service employees, the memorial came to be seen as an "appropriate place to celebrate and to grieve," according to NCTC Director Rick Lemon.

As the Shepherd College Marching Band played taps at the ceremony, a lone osprey circled overhead. Abundant once again after suffering from low numbers, the bird served as a reminder to those gathered that these lives had not been given in vain.

*Eric Eckl, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

Editor's Note: Members of the Service's Heritage Committee want to ensure that the memorial has a complete list of those individuals who lost their lives in their capacities as Service employees. For more information, check the Web at <http://www.nctc.fws.gov/history/fallencomrades.html>.

NCTC Hosts Second Retirees Weekend

Some 40 current and former Service employees gathered May 5-7 at the National Conservation Training Center for the second annual Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Weekend.

Retirees renewed old acquaintances, discussed future plans for the Service's national retiree group, enjoyed helpful seminars on retirement benefits and recent changes in the agency, and took field trips to local attractions. The retirees were given a tour of the new Fallen Comrades Memorial on the NCTC campus and many shared memories of their colleagues who lost their lives in the line of duty.

The highlight of the event was a spirited performance of "Paul Kroegel and the Feather Trade" by the Pelican Island Players, led by Pelican Island refuge manager Paul Tritaik.

The next reunion will be held April 20-22, 2001, at the training center. Look for more information in upcoming issues of *Fish & Wildlife News*, in the mail and on the Web at <http://www.nctc.fws.gov/history/retirees.html>. To be added to the list of retirees, contact Dennis Holland at dholland@intercom.net or Mark Madison at 304 876-7276 or mark_madison@fws.gov.

Mark Madison, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Transitions...Who's Coming and Going

Rowan Gould is the new Deputy Regional Director for Region 1. Gould was previously the Deputy Assistant Director for Fisheries.

Janet Kennedy, an outdoor recreation planner and refuge manager with 11 years of experience on national wildlife refuges in Massachusetts, is the new manager for the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. From 1989 to 1999, Kennedy worked at Great Meadows NWR Complex based in Sudbury, first as outdoor recreation planner and most recently as deputy refuge manager for a network of eight national wildlife refuges in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Kennedy began her Service career in 1989 as an outdoor recreation planner at the Parker River refuge. Prior to her tenure with the Service, Kennedy worked for 12 years in various jobs at five national parks throughout the country.

The new manager at Great Bay NWR in coastal New Hampshire is **Jimmie Reynolds**, a career Service employee. In his new position, Reynolds oversees wildlife management activities and recreational opportunities on the 1,083-acre refuge, which was established in 1992 through a transfer of former Pease Air Force base property from the U.S. Department of Defense to the Service. Reynolds also administers a 28-acre conservation easement in Concord, N.H., which protects important habitat for the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. Reynolds' career with the Service began in 1986 at Great Swamp NWR in New Jersey where he worked as a Student Conservation Association intern. He has also worked at Benton Lake NWR in Montana and at Idaho's Kootenai NWR.

In Memoriam

Chuck Hunt, native contact representative for Alaska's Yukon Delta NWR, died in May. He was 55. Hunt came to work for the Service in 1978 at Clarence Rhode NWR, later renamed the Yukon Delta refuge. The focus of his work was to help amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to make it legal for Alaska natives to hunt for birds in spring, as had been traditional, without the fear of violating the law. Hunt was also a strong advocate of converting from lead to steel shot for hunting in Alaska, and he taught non-toxic steel shot clinics as well as boating and bear safety classes. Hunt had suffered a stroke last September but after several months of rehabilitation was able to return to Yukon Delta Refuge in February. He fell ill again in May and died after another stroke and a heart attack.

Interior Department Marks Transitions

Kenneth L. Smith, formerly deputy chief of staff to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, has been nominated as the new Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. Smith replaces **Donald J. Barry**, who will become the executive vice president of The Wilderness Society.

Prior to joining the Interior Department as deputy director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1993, Smith served as environmental policy advisor and special assistant under Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. Before that he worked for the Arkansan Natural Heritage Commission and the Nature Conservancy in Little Rock. Smith has also served as the Department's deputy director of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, and as director of External Affairs.



Farewell. Service Deputy Director Marshall Jones (left) presented outgoing Assistant Secretary Don Barry with a mounted replica of a white heron. FWS photo: Rachel F. Levin.

Barry joined the Department of the Interior as a staff attorney for the Service, becoming chief counsel to the agency in 1980. In 1986, he left the Department to become general counsel for Fisheries & Wildlife for the Committee on Merchant Marine & Fisheries in the U.S. House of Representatives. Barry also served as vice president for U.S. Land and Wildlife for the World Wildlife Fund.

Interior department employees gathered in July to bid Barry farewell. The Service presented Barry with a replica of a white heron, as well as a jar containing soil from a number of national wildlife refuges.

*Rachel F. Levin, Public Affairs,
Washington, DC*

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Fish & Wildlife Honors...

N.D. Employee Receives Civil Service Award

Billie Yantzer, an administrative support assistant for the North Dakota Field Office, was named Federal Civil Servant of the Year by the Bismarck-Mandan Federal Executive Association, an organization of representatives of the federal offices in the Bismarck, North Dakota, area. Yantzer, a 25-year government veteran, was selected from nearly 1,000 federal employees in the area and honored for taking innovative approaches to problem solving, volunteering to travel to Service offices in other states to deal with pressing administrative needs, assuming a leadership role in developing a national training course for administrative support personnel, managing a traveling outreach trunk program that goes to dozens of schools each year and learning the skills of a computer technician.

Fishway Project Selected for Partnership Award

The Little Falls Fishway Project, in which the Service played a key leadership role, was one of three U.S. projects selected for a Coastal America Partnership Award. Service biologists Steve Funderburk, now the deputy executive director of the North American Waterfowl and Wetlands Office in Arlington, and Peter Bergstrom, of the Chesapeake Bay Field Office, chaired the interagency task group that coordinated the effort. Seventeen cooperating agencies and organizations had a hand in the \$1.5 million fishway on the Potomac River, which notched the 41-year-old Little Falls dam and opened 10 more miles of spawning and nursery habitat for the imperiled American shad. With support from Sen. Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, the intergovernmental task forced chaired by Funderburk and Bergstrom helped plan and obtain financing for the project. Coastal America is an alliance of mostly federal agencies that established the umbrella organization in 1992 and is committed to a national effort to protect, restore and maintain coastal resources.

Two in Southwest Honored

Joy Nicholopoulos, branch chief for Endangered Species in Region 2, was recognized for her outstanding support to the Wildlife Section of the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division in many cases brought against the Service under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Gregory Stover, a Service special agent, was also recognized for his outstanding support after he teamed with the assistant U.S. attorney for the Albuquerque area to successfully prosecute traffickers of rare North American wild cats under the Lacey Act.

Virginia Casework Earns Awards

Two Service law enforcement officers in Richmond, Virginia, received public service awards in May from the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia for their investigative work on Lacey Act violations involving young American eels, known as elvers. Elvers in Virginia were taken and sold illegally, then transported to North Carolina. Senior Resident Agent Don Patterson and Special Agent Eric Holmes compiled months of cellular phone, hotel, bank and credit card records, conducted video surveillance, interviewed witnesses, and monitored telephones to establish a case. Patterson led a team of state and federal agents from three states in a search of homes and businesses in North Carolina. As a result of the investigation, five people were convicted of trafficking in elvers. The Service is concerned about the harvest of elvers because they are an important part of aquatic ecosystems. During the past three years, a dramatic increase in the commercialization of elvers for Asian food has affected American eel populations.

Writing Awards for Region 2 Biologist

Region 2 fishery biologist Craig Springer received top prizes in June in the Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers 2000 writing contest. At the group's annual conference in Bryce Canyon, Utah, Springer was awarded first place for scripts for the Service's video "Aquatic Conservation Challenges: The National Fish Hatchery System in the 21st Century." Springer also nailed first place with an *Endangered Species Bulletin* story titled "Apache Trout: On the Brink of Recovery." His story on a rare fish in New Mexico, "Ice-Age Survivor: Southern Redbelly Dace," took first place for newspaper writing.

Fish & Wildlife... In Brief

Donation Boosts Sea Otter Reward

An anonymous, private donation through the Friends of the Sea Otter doubled the \$12,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who shot and killed a southern sea otter along the central California coast in April. The Division of Law Enforcement, Friends of the Sea Otter, Defenders of Wildlife, the Humane Society of the United States and the Center for Marine Conservation each previously had pledged \$2,500 toward the reward fund; the anonymous donation brings the reward total to \$25,000. The otter was found on the beach between Point Conception and the Piedras Blancas lighthouse, and examination revealed it died of a gunshot wound. The incident is being investigated jointly by the Service and California Department of Fish and Game. Southern sea otters are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and also are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Killing a species protected by these laws could result in fines of up to \$10,000 for each law violated.

Crackdown Nabs Record Number of Fishing Violators

Law enforcement officers from nine police and natural resource agencies charged more than 152 people with 358 violations for fishing illegally for American shad and striped bass on the Potomac River near Washington, D.C., between May 4 and May 13. This is believed to be the largest number of natural resource law citations during any one operation in the District. The anglers



The Ecosystem Approach: A Blue Jeans Assessment

were cited for fishing during a closed season, fishing without licenses, fishing with nets, taking undersized fish, snagging fish and exceeding the daily limit. Penalties for the citations range from \$50 to \$100 per violation. The number of American shad has continually declined during the past 50 or more years. While the number of striped bass has recovered since 1995 to stable population levels, large-sized striped bass appear to be reduced in number. Taking large numbers of fish during spawning season significantly reduces the future fish population, and the Service estimates that 200 to 300 fish are being taken illegally in the area daily.

New Refuge System Web Site Geared Toward Media, Film Makers

In preparation for the approaching centennial anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a new "online almanac" of information for reporters and film makers is now available at <http://refuges100.fws.gov>. With more than 75 pages of information, links to ten searchable databases, and hundreds of public domain images, the Refuges 100 site provides "one-stop shopping" for the information most frequently requested by reporters and film makers about the 93-million acre refuge system. Refuge managers can use the site as a tool to promote the system centennial and in day-to-day interaction with reporters. The Refuges 100 site was designed to avoid many of the pitfalls journalists encounter

when researching their stories online. All time-sensitive material is clearly dated, and contact numbers and e-mail addresses are always at your fingertips so you can quickly confirm that your information is current and complete.

Agreement to Benefit Native Plants and Habitats

Imperiled North American plants and their habitats received a boost when the Service and the Center for Plant Conservation announced an agreement to work together to protect native plants, including those listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The memorandum of understanding, announced during the 2000 World Botanic Gardens Congress in Asheville, North Carolina, in June, establishes a broad framework for joint conservation efforts and public education about the biological, medical, economic, and aesthetic contributions native plant species and their habitats make to the nation's quality of life. Originally founded in 1984, the Center for Plant Conservation is supported by a consortium of 29 botanical gardens and arboreta throughout the United States.

(Continued from back cover)

It would be a mistake to push for ecosystem-based budgets in the Washington Office. If we did, I fear the ecosystem approach would become a political rather than a resource-driven process, with monies siphoned to areas with strong Congressional delegations—the Florida Everglades and southern California, for instance—at the expense of areas that are just as biologically important, but that lack the large numbers of votes—the grasslands and the front range of the Rockies, for example. However, the Washington Office Ecosystem Team will work hard to ensure that the programs in Washington understand and support the field's ecosystem priorities.

I cannot stress enough that the ecosystem approach is not a new program for which we need to find funding. Rather it is a way of thinking to guide our work. It is a philosophy that values each employee's expertise and encourages us to work together.

In many ways, the past few years have been about the essential process of organizational change and exploring how we work. We have emerged from that experience stronger and wiser, with a streamlined organization primed to capitalize on our greatest assets—our program diversity—and geared to meet the challenges of this new conservation century.



Jamie Rappaport Clark



The Ecosystem Approach: A Blue Jeans Assessment

by Director Jamie Rappaport Clark

At the last Ecosystem Approach Implementation Team meeting, I participated in a frank discussion that opened my eyes to the many issues facing our employees and the incredible opportunities that lie before us. I would like to share my thoughts from that meeting.

First, I want to acknowledge the difficulties we've had in adapting to the ecosystem approach. When the directorate first launched this idea, it was presented as something new and different; an impression took hold that the ecosystem approach was about generating budget proposals to finance ecosystem projects above and beyond regular program duties. In retrospect, we should have been clearer about our expectations. We should have pointed to the many field personnel who were already putting into practice ecosystem principles such as cross-program collaboration and partnership building—models of the future of conservation.

Had we done that, we all would have seen that the ecosystem approach does not force a choice between ecosystem priorities and program priorities. Rather, it encourages each program to dovetail its priorities with a strategy designed to meet the collective needs of the landscape by focusing and maximizing our effectiveness on the ground.

That said, I would like to share my expectations for the implementation of the ecosystem approach. First, I expect each ecosystem team to have a resource-driven, biologically-based plan of action that identifies the conservation challenges facing each ecosystem and prioritizes specific actions to meet those challenges.

Second, I expect the programs to collaborate and synchronize their efforts according to these plans so that the Service's diverse expertise can focus on the landscape-level challenges the plans identify. The regional special assistants for ecosystems should facilitate this process. Much of what the programs do independently addresses many ecosystem challenges; by dovetailing them, we seize an opportunity to maximize their effectiveness.

Our strength lies in the diversity of our programs. We have the world's premier wildlife law enforcement operation. We have some of the best habitat managers overseeing our wildlife refuges and providing technical assistance to private landowners. We have top-notch scientists in our migratory bird, fisheries and endangered species programs. The ecosystem approach is a perfect fit because it joins all these programs and harmonizes their efforts, maximizing their effectiveness and efficiency.

I've seen it succeed. In the Ohio River, a cross-program effort is saving native mussels from the invasive zebra mussel. In Oregon, our expertise helped the Bureau of Land Management restore part of the Wood River. And in northern Florida, the refuges, ecological services and fisheries programs collaborated to restore scrub jay habitat. The ecosystem approach is the smart way—indeed, the only way—for us to operate, especially in times of limited budgets and growing natural resource challenges.

Of course, the size of our budget is always a limiting factor. But that should not keep us from drafting and fine-tuning our ecosystem plans. Well-thought-out plans give us strong justifications for our budget request. One last point on the budget: Any discretion within our budget should remain with the programs at the regional level and focus on priorities identified in ecosystem plans. Further, project leaders and regional managers have the discretion to direct programmatic activities so that they contribute to ecosystem goals.

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