

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Large Lakes Research Station
9311 Groh Road
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
Phone: (734) 362-7736
Fax: (734) 692-7603
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river

News Release



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Contact: Jennifer Braatz (734) 362-7736



DPS COMMUNITY DISTRICT'S RALPH J. BUNCHE ACADEMY PARTNERS WITH THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

DETROIT -- Detroit Public Schools Community District's Ralph J. Bunche Academy and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge have entered into a partnership to enhance conservation education and inspire a sense of wonder for natural resources in students. The Refuge is young, only established in 2001, and is part of a system of over 560 wildlife refuges scattered throughout the United States and territories, totaling more than 150 million acres of land and water devoted to conservation and outdoor recreation. Metropolitan Detroit is home to the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America. That makes Ralph J. Bunche the first partnership school to the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America!

This partnership plans to continue for years to come. Each year, 4th, 5th and 6th graders will get multiple in-class visits from refuge staff and a fieldtrip to the Refuge each fall and spring. All of the programs that are presented through the partnership are curriculum-based on the Next Generation Science Standards. Students have the opportunity to explore the natural world and all aspects of nature through fun and hands-on educational activities.

Park Ranger, Jennie Braatz describes the goal of this partnership as follows:

“The objective of this partnership is to help students to recognize that each and every one of them is a naturalist. We start the year off by having the students make their own nature journals that they will keep with them throughout the year. We discuss what a naturalist is and we learn about famous naturalists, both historical and modern. The point we want to drive home is that no matter what the future holds, no matter what careers the students go into as adults, they can all be naturalists. It can be a fun hobby -- a way of life that keeps them connected to nature and can infiltrate every aspect of their lives. We want the students to walk away from this program knowing that they are part of an ecosystem that includes all the nature around them. We envision a future of doctors, teachers, stay-at-home parents, grocers,

bus drivers, auto workers, and more who are all connected to the natural world and will always be safe and at home in nature.”

Diana Koss, a 6th grade Science teacher says, “I believe what the Refuge is doing with the students has increased their awareness of their carbon footprints on the environment. They are much more aware of their surroundings and how they are responsible for taking care of our Earth. The refuge has brought them out of their neighborhoods and into another world. They love it! Thank you so much for choosing our school. We are truly blessed!”

KeJuan Trice, a 6th grade student loves nature because “...there is so much to do. For instance you can cloud watch or bird watch, you can do anything with nature - just don't damage any habitats.”

The students are able to visit the refuge thanks to bus funds provided by the Bruce Jones Environmental Education Fund through the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is proud to not only be the only international refuge in North America, but one of only 14 priority urban refuges in the nation charged with bringing conservation to cities. It covers 48 miles of shoreline along the lower Detroit River and western basin of Lake Erie -- stretching from southwest Detroit to the Ohio-Michigan border. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting and restoring habitat for 300 species of birds and 117 species of fish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently owns or cooperatively manages 6,202 acres of unique habitats and partners with Michigan Department of Natural Resource on conservation of 7,897 acres of state-owned land. A Canadian registry of lands now includes 3,797 acres of Essex Region Conservation Authority lands and 981 acres of City of Windsor lands. In total, 18,877 acres of land in southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario are now being cooperatively managed for conservation and outdoor recreation for nearly seven million people living in a 45-minute drive.

More than 80% of Americans now live in urban or suburban communities and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service values the role that urban refuges play in: bringing conservation to cities; providing innovative educational programming and volunteer opportunities; and helping develop the next generation of conservationists.

For more information about the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, contact the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge at 734-362-7736, jennifer_braatz@fws.gov or the DPSCD Office of Communication, Chrystal Wilson, Press Secretary chrystal.wilson@detroitk12.org. For additional information about the Refuge visit: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River.

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Bunche Academy 6th grade students play a habitat game on Belle Isle (photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).



Bunche Academy 6th grade students go on a nature hike at Belle Isle (photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).