U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Spring 2016

THE NATURE OF VOLUNTEERING

Edwin B. Forsythe NWR Volunteer Newsletter

It's springtime! The weather is getting warmer and everything seems to be bursting into life. Birds are singing, leaves are unfolding, butterflies are starting to be seen and mammals are waking from their winter sleep.

Spring at Forsythe is an exciting time. Take a walk on our many trails. Look carefully for white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and squirrels. Near fresh water habitats watch for muskrats and otters. Mink can often be spotted as they forage for their next meal. During March, April, and May the marsh grasses change from winter's brown to the green of warmer times. Peepers mating calls are heard in freshwater habitats; the raucous sounds of the laughing gulls fill the air. Ospreys return from their "winter vacation" in the south and take up residence. Osprey Outlook on the refuge boardwalk, complete with telescopes and interpretive panel, provides for outside viewing of an osprey nest. An "osprey cam" provides live views of the nest activity on a monitor in the visitor information center. Meanwhile, beach-nesting birds arrive as the annual spring migration begins. Our purple martins return to their nests between the visitor information center and the headquarters building. The colony, which nests in the many gourds hanging from poles, is visible as you enter the wildlife drive. Watch out for diamondback terrapins, which can be seen bobbing up and down in the creeks. Look for females coming ashore to lay their eggs in the sandy soil. Be careful not to run over them!

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.
-Margaret Atwood

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CHIEF'S CORNER

Cynthia Martinez, Chief
National Wildlife Refuge
System

Look Up. That Bird Was Probably at a Wildlife Refuge

Well-known birder and author Kenn Kaufman said recently on Facebook, "National wildlife refuges protect some of the most amazing habitats for birds and other wildlife in the USA. These public lands represent a treasure for all Americans."

I wholeheartedly agree.

Pick up any birding magazine or guide, and you're sure to see so many references to wildlife refuges that you will lose count. We all know the story of the brown pelican whose protection launched the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1903 with the establishment in Florida of Pelican Island bird reservation — now known as a national wildlife refuge. More than 200 refuges have been established for migratory birds.

In our 113-year history, the National Wildlife Refuge System has made huge strides on behalf of migratory bird conservation. This Refuge Update celebrates the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty and related conservation from Bayou Sauvage Refuge in Louisiana and Tamarac Refuge in Minnesota to Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District in Nebraska and Sacramento Refuge in California.

Not only do millions of migratory birds find homes among the National Wildlife Refuge System's stunning array of marshes, wetlands, deserts, forests, great rivers and small prairies. They also find a home in the urban areas served by wildlife refuges. Not enough urban residents know that.

The Urban Bird Treaty program has helped make a difference. Cities today are filled with hawks, osprey, songbirds and more.

Now let's teach kids and families in big and small cities that when we talk about migratory bird flyways, those are not far-off places. Flyways include places where millions of people live, city neighborhoods where people can see a breathtaking variety of birds. With effective communications, city residents will recognize that they can go to a nearby refuge to learn more about helping bird populations.

The Refuge System has been crucial in nurturing migratory bird species. State-of-the-art waterfowl management is

practiced on thousands of waterfowl protection areas and hundreds of wildlife refuges. We've brought birds back to their historic ranges, increased populations, given visitors sights that they'll travel hundreds of miles to see — and helped sustain the economies of communities where birding is a passion.

Fewer people know that our federal wildlife officers are among migratory birds' best friends. They regulate migratory bird take and possession limits under international treaties like the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They regulate hunting license capability to ensure that proper limits are met on particular migratory bird species. And they ensure that migratory birds have safe places to rest during non-hunting seasons as they work closely with sportsmen's groups, tribal law enforcement and state agencies.

Americans are learning that when they see birds in their communities, vast flocks on the wing, even some hummingbirds at their feeders, they have national wildlife refuges to thank. So, when you look up and experience the magnificence of a bird in flight, you might wonder which national wildlife refuge provided benefit to that bird.

Photos: Don Freiday, USFWS

Marc Virgilio, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

It has been over 3 years since Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New Jersey, but its effects are still felt here at the Refuge and statewide. Hurricane Sandy significantly impacted the Wildlife Drive system and required emergency repairs to maintain its integrity. Since then, staff have been hard at work planning and implementing projects to restore our Refuge and make it more resilient to future storms.

This spring and summer, we will be entering the construction phase of work at the Wildlife Drive Impoundment System. These projects will give managers the ability to better manage the site and plan for the future.

The Turtle Cove section of South Dike and the Dogleg section of North Dike will be strengthened with additional riprap (rock) armoring to protect against erosion. The foundation of riprap will be covered with soil and planted with native saltmarsh/upland vegetation. Called a "living shoreline", this covering will help buffer against wave energy and provide additional habitat for wildlife.

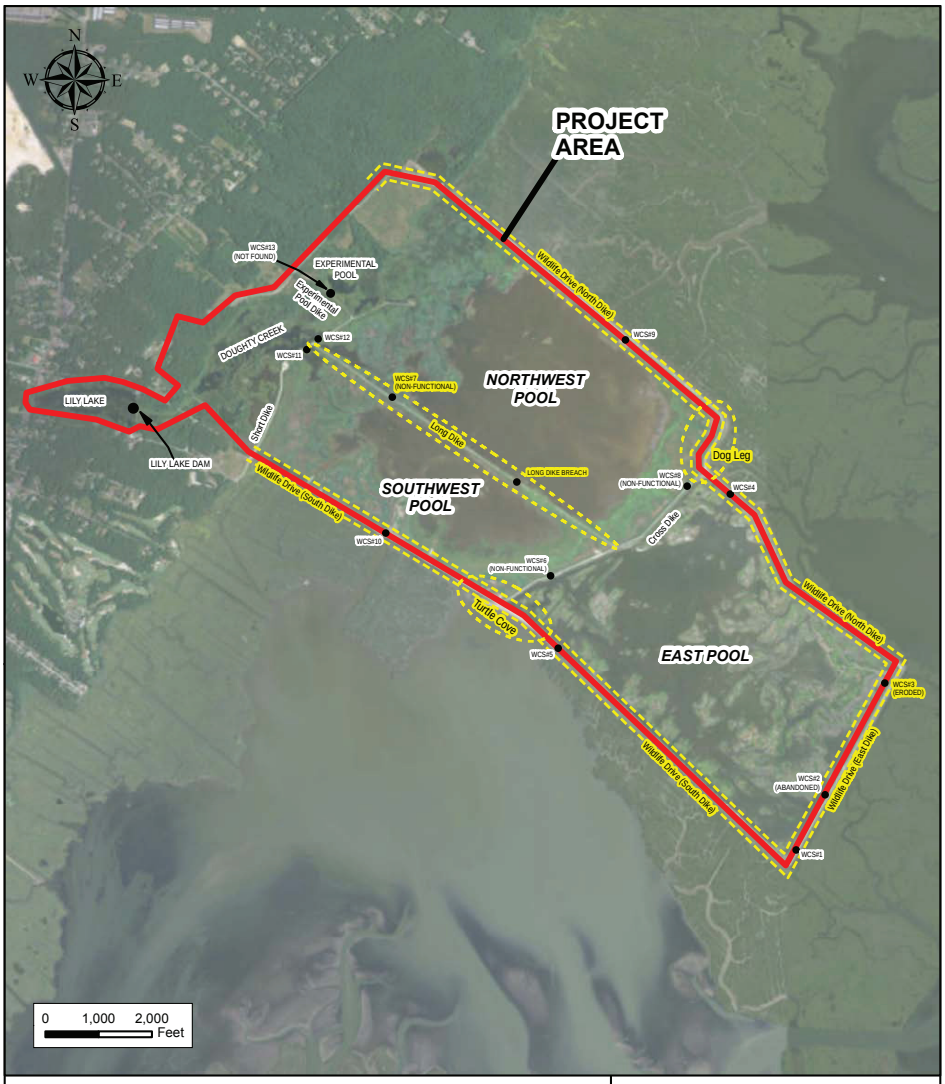
Several water control structures around the drive, which allow water to move into or out of the impoundments, will be replaced or undergo repairs. Once fixed, the Refuge will have greater water level management capability in the impoundments, allowing us to more efficiently manage habitat for the variety of wildlife which utilize the system.

Long Dike, which bisects Northwest and Southwest Pools, has been breached for several years. The breach and overall dike will be repaired, allowing the Refuge to manage water levels in them independently based on preferred habitat goals for waterbirds

The Wildlife Drive will also be "capped" with recycled crushed concrete around its six mile perimeter, making the drive more resistant to wear from rain and storms.

During construction, which will occur through August 2016, there may be temporary, partial or complete closures of the Wildlife Drive. We are still working with our contractor to finalize exact construction times and do not have estimates on when/where these closures will occur. Work could begin in mid to late April.

The Wildlife Drive Impoundment System (System) was constructed in the early 1950s to meet the habitat needs of migratory birds (e.g., waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds). The approximately 1500 acre system consists primarily of Lily Lake, Doughty Creek, Northwest Pool, Southwest Pool, and East Pool. The exterior impoundment dike, Wildlife Drive, receives over 100,000 visitors annually.



LEGEND

PROJECT AREA

WATER CONTROL STRUCTURE

WORK AREA

WORK AREA

Image Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

amec foster wheeler

Figure 1.3

Project Site Map
HQ Impoundment Design-Build Project
E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge
Oceanville, New Jersey

Rev. By: CB	Project No.: 3617157354	November 2015

A Message from our Refuge Manager, Virginia Rettig

It has been a few years since we brought you a newsletter and we are happy to be back! A lot has happened during that time. We are still actively engaged in projects that have been a direct result of Hurricane Sandy. Last summer, we completed the debris removal project and we just finished up a project that replaced all of the boundary signs damaged or displaced by the storm.

Along with those restorative projects, we also received funding to do habitat work. Most of those projects are being designed as we speak and will be under construction in a variety of places throughout the refuge from April through next year.

If you have been by the HQ area lately, you will see we are well underway in constructing our new Administration Building. It is clearly a long time in coming and we are thrilled. We are also constructing an addition to the Visitor Information Center which will eventually accommodate meetings and events. To be clear, the new buildings are not funded with Hurricane Sandy money, but were supported by our leadership in the Regional Office with maintenance funds.

It wasn't much of a winter this year, but it is now Spring so come on out to the refuge soon!

Have you met our new Deputy Refuge Manager, Rich Albers?

His first day at Forsythe was August 10th, but we've been keeping him pretty busy, so you may not have had a chance to meet Rich. He comes from the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex in southeastern Washington where he was the Assistant Refuge Manager responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Toppenish, Columbia, and Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuges. He began his career with the USFWS in Arlington, VA where he worked in both the International Affairs Program and then Headquarters for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In 2002 he moved on to manage the Merced National Wildlife Refuge which is part of the San Luis NWR Complex in Central California.

Richard has a B.A. in Biology from California State University, Fresno and a M.S. in Range Ecology from Colorado State University. He also served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras from 1993-1995 working in protected areas management and environmental education.

He is married and has two little stink bugs for kids, who you may see occasionally proudly wearing their blue volunteer vests.

Rich's last refuge, Columbia NWR is studded with striking cliff faces, providing exceptional habitat for some special species of wildlife.

The Ospreys of 158-A-001

Written by Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

Many people who visit the Wildlife Drive at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge go there for the amazing views of the coastal saltmarsh and the wildlife that occupy this habitat type. From when they arrive and until they depart, ospreys are one of the "main attractions" along the Drive. With eight nest platforms along the Drive, visitors have many different nests to watch. Many photographers who visit Forsythe come to document the annual life cycle of these ospreys. Since 2013, we have been lucky enough to share the annual life cycle of one of these pairs with the whole world through the Osprey Cam. Viewers are able to watch and admire a beautiful pair of ospreys who have nested atop 158-A-001 since 2013.

From looking back at our records, a nearby nesting platform was first installed in 2002. It was pretty close to the forest and after sitting empty for several years, it was decided that it would be best to install a new platform that was closer to water. We aren't sure why it wasn't used but we know that osprey love to nest in open areas near water and their main aerial predators are great horned owls, who nest in upland forested habitat. It was moved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife technician, Jeff Sloane and USFWS volunteers in 2010. Then the next year it became occupied! That year the pair produced two young. In 2012 the pair returned and successfully produced three young. That year we proposed to install a wireless, solar powered camera near the nest and Conserve Wildlife fundraised to purchase the camera system. After raising the funds required, in late February 2013 we installed the camera system with the help of some very dedicated volunteers. With the help of the newly installed camera we are now able to track milestones with the pairs annual life cycle. That year the pair arrived on March 29, 2013. They had a full clutch of three eggs on April 26th. We watched as the pair incubated the eggs through May until they hatched on May 25th. We visited the nest to band all three young

in late June, but with technical difficulties with the camera, could not watch them fledge.

In 2014 the same pair returned on March 30 (female) and April 3 (Male). With help from the camera, we have been able to identify the unbanded nesting pair. Birds can be identified by their iris or distinct feather markings (almost like a fingerprint for humans) on their head using high resolution images. This year they again, laid a full clutch of three eggs by April 26th. All three eggs hatched and we watched as the pair raised all three young. This was another frustrating year for viewers (and administrators of the camera!) because the camera died before the young fledged.

After repairing issues that we've had with the camera system over the past few years, we had high hopes that 2015 would go smoothly! The pair, who were the same as last year, arrived on March 19 (female) and March 24 (male). Again, the pair laid a full clutch of three eggs by April 25th. All three eggs hatched by May 28th. This year the young were not banded, but luckily we were able to watch all three young fledge in mid-late July!

We are currently in the process of getting the camera back online for this year. Just yesterday, March 16th, we replaced the two original (type 24 AGM) batteries, re-installed the microphone and audio encoder (it works!), and attempted to re-installed the pan-tilt-zoom camera. Our original attempt to get the camera back online was short-lived, since we found that the network cable leading to the camera was bad. Not to worry! A new one was ordered and delivered shortly thereafter and is being installed on Friday, March 17th and just in time for the pair to arrive back at their nest.

We hope that our pair of ospreys return safely to their home at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR so we can watch as they ensure that their species will live on for future generations to admire. Will the female return before the male as she has done over the past couple years? Time will tell. She will be here any day now! View the live feed: www.conservewildlifenj.org/ospreycam.Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

Morning Birdwalks

Amanda Calabrese, SCA Environmental Educator

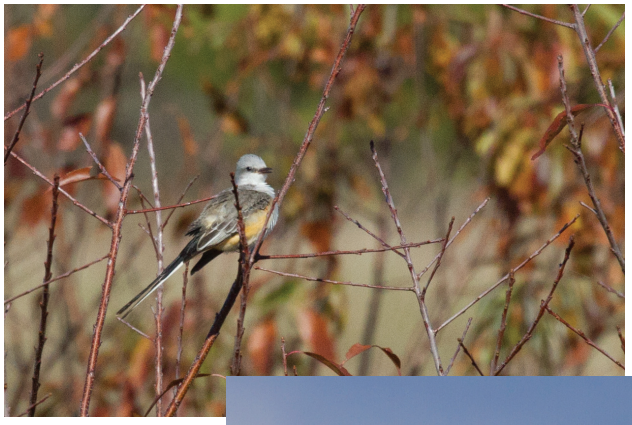
Every Friday morning with their binoculars ready, patrons meet by the visitor center and wait for the bird walk to begin. Volunteer Master Naturalist Kyle Chelius and SCA Environmental Educator Amanda Calabrese lead the group on a journey through different habitats at Forsythe.

The walk begins on the Leeds Eco Trail where we check for bald eagles perched on refuge boundary signs; then on the way to Gull Pond to check for herons and egrets in the pine trees. Along the way we scan the trees to make sure we don't miss any red-shouldered hawks. We try not to scan too long because all the trees begin to look like a red-shouldered hawk!

Located on the Atlantic Flyway, Forsythe is a prime resting location for migratory birds. Perhaps one of the most "exotic" birds that we saw this past year was the scissor-tailed flycatcher. This is a bird that is found in the south-central United States and Central America! It's likely that this bird was brought in with a storm; however, this presented birders with a unique opportunity to see a bird that would not normally be in New Jersey.

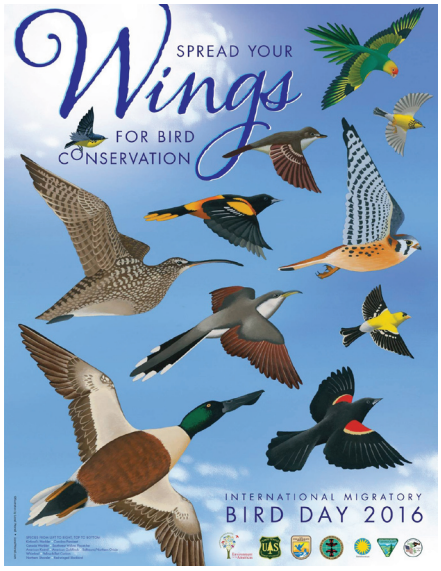
The best part about the walks is there is always something new to see and you're always learning. You don't have to be an expert to come on the walk; you just have to be passionate about the outdoors!

So come join us Friday mornings at 8:00 a.m. We'll meet you in the parking lot by the visitor center.



Photos: Kyle Chelius

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day 2016



Join us as Forsythe celebrates International Migratory Bird Day from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday, April 30. We're planning lots of fun and educational activities for the entire family:

For 2016, International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) will focus on how birds have inspired many of the most significant environmental conservation actions in the Americas – beginning with the Migratory Bird Treaty, the landmark 1916 agreement that for the last century has protected nearly all migratory bird species in the United States and Canada. IMBD is an opportunity to highlight the treaty and other agreements and laws that protect migratory birds, and it recognizes how citizens support programs and laws that protect birds and their habitats.

* * * * *

The following simple solutions are presented in the hope of connecting people to bird conservation and engaging people in actions that help birds.

- Windows collide with birds!
- Put a leash on!
- Leave Fledglings Where You Find Them!
- Clean Your Bird Feeders!
- Use Cloth Grocery Bags and Reusable Bottles!
- Recycle!
- Restore Natural Habitat in Your Community!
- Plant Native!
- Keep Your Distance!
- Slow Down When Driving!
- Be a Citizen Scientist
- Buy Bird Friendly Products!
- Teach Others About Birds!
- Take a Friend Bird Watching!
- Get Outdoors and Enjoy Nature!

The Friends of Forsythe NWR is a non-profit group established in 1998 to provide support and services to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in Oceanville, New Jersey. Our goals are:

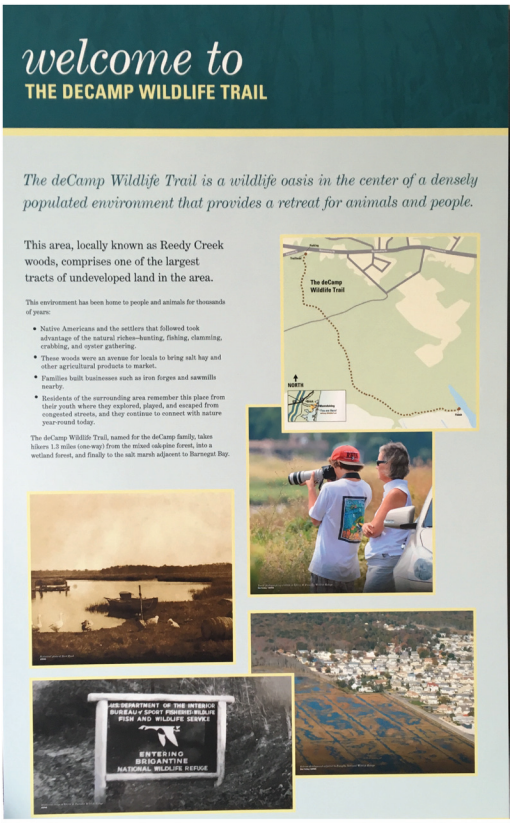
- Promoting a better understanding of the natural history and environment of Southern New Jersey, the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR and the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Helping to preserve and enhance the wildlife habitat at this Refuge, and to assist the Refuge, the Refuge System and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a variety of educational and supportive efforts.

Please consider joining the Friends of Forsythe and help us accomplish these goals. Call 609-652-1665 ext. 21 or visit www.friendsofforsythe.org

On October 22, 2012, Hurricane Sandy battered the coast of NJ causing severe damage to the refuge. The deCamp Trail in Brick Township, was the beginning of the 22 mile line of debris that was covered in tons of household trash, boats and wrack. The local community was devastated by the loss of their trail, that was heavily used for hiking and nature watching.

Debris removal, rebuilding of the boardwalk and bridges, and resurfacing the trail was completed from the Department of the Interior emergency funding for Hurricane Sandy restoration projects. To complete the project, the Friends of Forsythe gladly agreed to provide financial support to replace the interpretative signs and add new panels along the trail. The $18,000 project was awarded to Taylor Studios, for a three-sided main kiosk in the parking lot and five interpretative panels along the 1 ½ mile trail.

We were fortunate to have refuge work campers Ken Asher and Iris Swartz, who are talented tech writers, to organize the project. Ken and Iris worked diligently for several months on the text for the panels including input from community and gathered historical information from the deCamp family. The former Visitors Services Manager provided a majority of the photographs. The project which started last summer, is almost complete. The new panels will be installed this spring with help from Save Barnegat Bay, Comcast Cares and refuge staff and volunteers. A grand opening will be later this summer!



The Friends of Forsythe are looking for a few good eggs!

Love talking to people? We have weekend positions available in our Nature Store. One Saturday or Sunday shift a month; greet visitors, answer questions and use a cash register. Training and uniform shirt is provided.

Enjoy working with kids? Join our Environmental Education team that does outreach to local schools. Must be comfortable working with kids ages 5-17.

The Friend's Board has several positions available; President, Vice President, Public Relations, Grants and Fundraising.
For more information, contact Ann Marie Morrison 609-652-1665 ext 21 or annmorrison75@gmail.com

Connecting People with Nature
Let's Go Outside!

In honor of Dr. Seuss's 112th birthday, Forsythe partnered with Stockton University to "Read Across America." Over 45 children and parents came to the refuge to listen to students from the university's Water Watch environmental club read "The Lorax," and help make truffula trees to take home. The children were thrilled when T.R. Bear came to hear the story. Each child got a "diploma" for participating and the students each received a certificate of appreciation.

Long before "going green" was mainstream, Dr. Seuss's Lorax spoke for the trees and warned of the dangers of ignoring the importance of the environment. The story is about the Once-ler, who harvested a valley of Truffula Trees and changed the landscape forever. The Lorax, who is the guardian of the forest teaches the importance of seeing the beauty in the world around us and our responsibility to protect it.

Save the Monarch Butterfly

The monarch butterfly is one of the most recognizable species of wildlife in all of America. They undertake one of the world's most remarkable and fascinating migrations, traveling thousands of miles over many generations from Mexico, across the United States, to Canada.

North American monarch butterflies are in trouble. A variety of threats, including loss of milkweed habitat needed to lay their eggs and for their caterpillars to eat, are having a devastating impact on their populations and the migration phenomenon. Unless we act now to help the Monarch, this amazing animal could disappear in our lifetime.

The state of Monarchs reflects the health of the American landscape and its pollinators. Monarch declines are symptomatic of environmental problems that also pose risks to food production, the spectacular natural places that help define our national identity, and our own health. Conserving and connecting habitat for monarchs will benefit many other plants and animals, including critical insect and avian pollinators, and future generations of Americans.

Monarchs cannot survive without milkweed; their caterpillars dine exclusively on milkweed plants (Asclepias spp.), and monarch butterflies need milkweed to lay their eggs. With shifting land management practices, milkweed is disappearing from the American landscape.

Planting milkweed is a great way to help preserve the monarch butterfly and their incredible migration in addition to helping other pollinators, as they provide valuable nectar resources to a diverse suite of bees and butterflies. For a brief how-to flyer on planting and gardening, download MJV's Gardening for Monarchs or the Wild Ones "Wild for Monarchs" brochure.

Adult monarchs will drink the nectar of many flowers in addition to milkweed; in fact they need sources of nectar to nourish them throughout the entire growing season. Include a variety of native flowering species with different bloom times to provide monarchs with the food they need to reproduce in the spring and summer and to migrate in the fall. Offering a wide array of native nectar plants will attract monarchs and many other butterflies and pollinators to your habitat all season long.

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Earth Day Cleanup
Saturday, April 16 at 8:30 a.m. (rain or shine)
pre-registration suggested - 609-652-1665

International Migratory Bird Day Celebration
Saturday, April 30 9:00 a.m.

Campfire Singalongs
Fridays at 7 p.m.
April 29, May 6, 13, and 20
by the Children's Nature Discovery Area

Annual Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs derby
for kids 5 to 12
Saturday, May 7 at 8:00
Pre-registration required - call 609-652-1665

Evening at Forsythe
3rd Friday of every month at 7 p.m.
Refuge Auditorium

Bird and Nature Walks
Fridays from 8:00-10:00 a.m. Meet at visitor information center.

Wildlife Drive Tram Tours
Saturdays at 1:00 p.m. Call 609-652-1665 to reserve your seat

WHO'S ON STAFF?

Refuge Manager
Virginia Rettig

Deputy Refuge Manager
Rich Albers

Visitor Services Staff
Vacant - Visitor Services Manager
Sandy Perchetti
Amanda Calabrese

Biological Staff
Paul Castelli, Vinny Turner
Tom Baxter, Amy Drohan, Tom Gleason, Rebecca Reeves, Mason Sieges, Marc Virgilio

Refuge Law Enforcement Officer
Chris Pancila

Administrative Officer
Martha Reed

Maintenance Professionals
Tom Holdsworth, Roger Dutch

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