Fall 2015

THE WILDSIDE

A newsletter for the supporters of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE GROSSO

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ABOUT DRIWR & IWRA

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) is located along the lower Detroit River and western shoreline of Lake Erie. Established in 2001 as the fi rst International Wildlife Refuge in North America, it includes islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands along 48 miles of shoreline. Its unique location in a large urban area allowssignificant opportunities for the public to experience fish,wildlife and plants in their natural habitat.
Th e International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization- a "Friends" organization that works to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the development of the DRIWR. We invite you to become a supporter of IWRA .

Visit iwralliance.org, www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river and www.drhawkwatch.org for more periodic updates.

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A Message from the Alliance Chair

My hat is off for Dick Skoglund and the DRIWR Stewardship crew. What a great job! It seems that the more they do in the Humbug Marsh Unit, the more they find. Keep up the good work! ------ Dick Micka

Anyone looking for a rewarding way to spend a few hours of your time? Join the Stewardship crew by registering with Dick Skoglund at rcharge@aol.com. Workdays are Wednesdays and Fridays 9 am to Noon year round. You'll be glad you did!

Richard G. Micka, Chair
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board

Meet John Nicely
Maintenance Mechanic

For the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

First, please let me thank everyone for welcoming me to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. I am so happy to be here working with such great people and for such a great organization.

A little about myself . . .
I am a native of Ohio and married with two beautiful daughters, age 20 and 16. I have accepted the Maintenance Mechanic position for the refuge and have hit the ground running. My career started 24 years ago with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at the Great Swamp NWR in New Jersey as an Engineering Equipment Operator. From there, I went to Ankenny NWR in Oregon, then Eastern Neck NWR in Maryland, after many years there went on to Canaan Valley NWR in West Virginia before moving on to Ottawa NWR in Ohio.

I actually thought Ottawa NWR would be the last station I worked for to finish out may career. Then, one day an opening came available at Detroit River and here I am and plan to stay. I look forward to meeting everyone and working with all staff and volunteers associated with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Can you guess "Where Steve is"?

Hint: DRIWR island unit in the lower Detroit River. Once was a thriving amusement park with ball fields, a dance pavilion and even a roller coaster! Access for the public was by way of the S.S. Tashmoo. Beach is currently available for responsible family oriented public use during daylight hours between the Saturday before Memorial Day and Labor Day each year. Please enjoy YOUR REFUGE responsibly so we can continue to offer the community quality public use experiences. *Email your answer to iwr_alliance@yahoo.com. The first correct guess will receive a Nature Store tote bag!*

Duck Stamp Purchase

Supports Wetland Acquisition and Conservation Easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System

The purchase of a Federal Duck Stamp, on sale now, is required for all who hunt waterfowl. But, it is also an easy and cost-effective way for non-waterfowlers to contribute to the cause of wildlife conservation.

Bob Kornegay of the Albany Herald wrote, "The 2015-2016 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp is available for purchase. The image on this season's stamp features a pair of ruddy ducks. This year's stamp price increase (from $15 to $25) is the first "duck stamp" price rise since 1991. There has been no change in proceeds usage; 98% of collected funds will continue to go into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which supports wetland acquisition and conservation easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

He continued to note, since 1934 more than 135 million Federal Duck Stamps have been purchased. These purchases have generated almost $1 billion for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which has been used to purchase close to 6 million acres of habitat.

Federal Duck Stamps are sold at many sporting goods outlets and other retail locations. They can also be purchased at U.S. Post Offices. For more information, go to www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php

Visitor Service News

We have the BEST volunteers!

The Refuge has been fortunate this summer as volunteers have been busy working with staff to prepare the Refuge units for visitation. Our first big work day of the summer was with the amazing Ford MODEL Team volunteers. These folks gave up their work day to join us in the Gibraltar Bay Unit to remove decades old, barbed wire fencing along the waterfront. These fences were not only unpleasant to look at, but they also restricted movement of wildlife.

Within a few hours the Ford MODEL Team had cleared large sections and the character of the landscape dramatically improved. It was as if the waterfront of the Gibraltar Bay Unit just reappeared. DTE Energy volunteers followed on a second workday to continue the removal of the remaining fence, then proceeded to put up a split-rail fence along the trail by the Bay. We cannot thank them enough, we are very grateful for all their hard work!

Youth groups continued work throughout the summer on the Refuge as well. The Summit Academy Project Term brought thirty students for a full week and worked on both the Gibraltar Bay Unit and the Humbug Marsh Unit. Another school group, the Trenton Robotics High School Team, joined the Humbug Marsh Stewardship Crew for a morning of invasive plant management.

You can see for yourself the transformation when you enjoy a walk Sunday afternoons at the Gibraltar Bay Unit **May through October.** The open houses at this unit are hosted in partnership by the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy. The Gibraltar Bay Unit is located at 28820 East River Road, Grosse Ile, MI.

THANK YOU to all who continue to give their time and dedication to the many projects on the Refuge.

Neonicotinoids:
A threat to pollinators

Robert Primeau, DRIWR Landscape Designer

In the last few years, a dramatic decrease in the populations of bees, Monarch butterflies and other pollinators has led to a search both for causes and remedies.

Pollinator species such as bees and butterflies fill a critical role in both the planetary ecology and in our economy. Pollinating the world's flowering plants as they collect pollen for food, bees and butterflies help many plants complete their life cycles and reproduce. In the United States, fully one third of our food supply depends on bee pollination alone.

Within the last few years, pollinator numbers have been steeply declining, with 30% of bee colonies dying off annually. This is three times the typical winter die-off rate, with some beekeepers reporting annual die-off rates of 90%. Similarly, Monarch butterflies, an iconic and celebrated species, have in the last 20 years faced a stunning 80% population decline.

Pathogens and mites spread by global trade followed by harsh winters are believed to be partially responsible for population declines, as well as habitat loss due to development. However, one of the most acute and immediately preventable drivers of pollinator deaths comes from a pernicious type of pesticide called a neonicotinoids.

Neonicotinoids, known as neonics for short, are a relatively new agricultural pesticide. After being developed in the late 1970's, their use increased throughout the 1980s and 1990's, developing into a nearly $2.6 billion industry worldwide. Today, they have the potential to be found on nearly every type of plant product sold in the US, from the tomatoes bought at a grocery store to the Coneflowers or Hydrangeas purchased at a nursery.

Neonics are a systemic neurotoxin similar to in chemical structure to nicotine. "Systemic" means that the herbicide gets distributed to every part of a treated plant. This is the key to neonic pesticides' effectiveness. Neonics are added to the water of developing plants or coated onto seeds. As it grows the plant incorporates the neonic chemicals into its structure, making the entire plant – stem, leaves, flowers, pollen, and fruit - systemically toxic to insects for the duration of their lifespan. As the pesticides use has spread it has literally created a poisonous landscape for insects. From the corn growing in a farmer's field to butterfly bushes planted in your backyard, all of them possibly or even likely contain pollinator-killing neonicotinoids.

Examples of Neonicotinoid Garden Products used in the U.S.

Neonicotinoid	Garden and ornamental uses
Imidacloprid	Foliar spray for turf and ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs. Soil drench for garden fruits and vegetables, and ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs. Trunk injection for shrubs or trees. Granules for turf and ornamental flowers, shrubs or trees.
Clothianidin	Granules for turf, and ornamental flowers, shrubs or trees.
Thiamethoxam	Foliar spray for turf and ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs. Granules for turf and ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs.
Acetamiprid	Foliar spray for garden fruits and vegetables, and ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs.
Dinotefuran	Granules for turf and ornamental flowers, shrubs or trees. Soil drench for ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs.

For more info : www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/NeonicotinoidsInYourGarden_Wings-Fall2012.pdf

As the global effects of neonics began to be better understood, a mixed response has developed. In 2013 Neonicotinoids were banned in the European Union but may be reintroduced to the market, as studies have not been able to quantify species damage from neonics alone. Back home in the United States, neonicotinoids are being studied by the Environmental Protection Agency, though recommendations on restrictions will not be given until 2018.

In the meantime, some plant providers have indicated that they will be voluntarily sourcing neonic-free plants for their nurseries. This includes Lowe's, which has announced its nurseries will be neonic-free by 2016. Other providers such as Home Depot have begun labeling plants that contain the chemicals.

In the meantime, The White House is encouraging government agencies to develop policies that bolster both bee and Monarch butterfly numbers as well as their habitats. Towards those ends, the Department of Interior has formed a partnership with the National Wildlife Federation to encourage outreach and conservation projects related to Monarch habitat. These projects range from educational programs about pollinators to planting projects to restore pollinator habitat.

Some of these policy changes directly relate to neonics. The Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, has declared that any plants being planted on Refuges for any purpose be certified as neonicotinoid-free. This includes anything from plant plugs, seeds, or tree saplings used in habitat restorations, to the landscaping installed around our future Visitor Center – all these plants will be neonic-free and safe for wildlife.

What can you do? When planting around the house, particularly when designing gardens for pollinators, always check your sources. Smaller-scale plant suppliers are less likely to use neonicotinoids than larger name-brand plant sources, but with practices currently changing, it is always useful to ask. You can also avoid using over-the-counter pesticides that include neonicotinoids. With extra attention paid to where we are sourcing our plants, we can help ensure a safer landscape for our valued and irreplaceable pollinator species.

FORD MARSH UNIT PUMP INSTALLATION COMPLETE

September 23, 2009 -- Automotive Components Holding Inc. donated 241 acres of the historic Ford Marsh to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to be included in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR). Once the donation was completed, DRIWR staff began internal discussions on restoration options and management strategies for the property.

In 2010 we began work with Ducks Unlimited to develop a plan to manage the Ford Marsh Unit to provide maximum habitat value for migratory birds and other wetland dependent wildlife species, while reducing the number of non-native invasive species present on site.

GREAT NEWS!
September 2015 -- the installation of a new pump structure was completed with the help from great partners like Ducks Unlimited, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Ford Motor Company. This structure will allow maximum flexibility for management of the marsh.

Prior to the acquisition of Ford Marsh, DRIWR staff were involved in a multi-stakeholder process of setting targets for removing and reducing two beneficial use impairments (BUI) - the degradation of fish and wildlife habitats, and loss of fish and wildlife habitat, as identified in the 1987 River Raisin Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the River Raisin Area of Concern (AOC). The restoration and/or enhancement of the Ford Marsh Unit are key in delisting the River Raisin AOC.

EVEN BETTER NEWS!
September 10, 2015 -- we were notified that the wildlife BUIs listed above were removed, paving the way to delisting of the River Raisin AOC.

STATE of the STRAIT

By: Anna Cook, Detroit River IWR

On December 9th, 2015 a tradition between the United States and Canada will continue with the biennial State of the Strait Conference. This year the conference will be held at the Eastern Michigan University. The State of the Strait is a Canada-U.S. one-day conference held every two years that brings together government managers, researchers, students, environmental and conservation organizations, and concerned citizens to assess ecosystem status and provide advice to improve research, monitoring, and management from Lake St. Clair to the western basin of Lake Erie.

The theme for the 2015 conference is "Coordinating Conservation in the St. Clair-Detroit River System". It is with generous sponsor donations registration for this event is free. There is a recognized need to prioritize restoration, monitor effectiveness and adaptively manage coastal systems throughout the Great Lakes.

The same is true in the St. Clair-Detroit River System, where diverse groups use multiple tools and methodologies that, if applied in a coordinated manner, have the potential to more effectively address these needs and develop conservation solutions that also account for socioeconomic values. The 2015 State of the Strait will explore current efforts and new ways to maximize the effectiveness of conservation efforts conducted by multiple agencies and organizations, and how we can incorporate human well-being and socioeconomic factors into conservation planning for the region.

For more information about the State of the Strait conference, including registration and location, please visit www.stateofthestrait.org. Display space is available for conference sponsors and vendors

Summer Bio-Techs Talk of Their Experience

"...to develop the next generation of conservation stewards".

Nicole LaFleur and Tyler Dolin

I am very grateful for having the opportunity to work at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge this summer. I grew up in Wyandotte but have studied Great Lakes coastal wetlands across Michigan for the past three years. It was exciting to apply my education and passion for conservation and restoration to ecosystems in my home region. I enjoyed learning about natural resources management, as my prior experiences have been strictly research based.

My favorite part of this summer was getting to observe the different plant communities in each unit. While the native plants found were pretty consistent across the units in the Refuge, there was variation in abundance and diversity, or, as Greg would say, "Same deck, different hand". It was interesting to see how variations in hydrology, wetland quality, and anthropogenic impacts influenced the vegetation structure. Of course, our job was to manage the invasive species that threaten these ecosystems and predicting the transitions that will occur after management was more exciting than simply observing them. We were also given the opportunity to attend a symposium on the Cooperative Weed Management Program where we learned about the grant that funds this project. It was valuable for us to see how much work went in to obtaining this funding as well as the importance of working closely with other collaborators to cooperatively manage our local resources.

Mapping and eliminating invasive plants was rewarding as we assisted in the refuge's mission to "establish an international conservation region where a clean environment fosters health and diversity of wildlife, fish, and plant resources through effective habitat management and resource protection".
As we continue this project next summer and carry out our management plans, I am eager to watch the transformations from highly invaded areas to functional coastal wetlands that provide better habitat for wildlife and educational opportunities for the community.

Nicole LaFleur, Summer Biological Technician

This summer has been one of knowledge in many different areas. I entered the position newly from my undergraduate degree, feeling quite confident in my understanding of local flora and fauna, but I was quickly overcome by all that there was to study. I learned a large amount about aquatic vegetation including different types of sedges, rushes, and respective Latin names and native ecosystems. Being exposed to all these plant types was key for me to learn and understand them.

I was able to observe the methods of ecosystem management which included water level control by use of pumps, invasive species removal and growing specific plants. With both ecosystem knowledge and management skills, the history of the location could be interpreted and used in the correct manner to let the ecosystem thrive at its fullest potential. I also gained equipment experience and skills from working with Marsh Master, an amphibious vehicle, as well as the identification and techniques for removal of invasive species.

The staff of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge are an amazing group of people that made my summer full of learning and wonderful experiences.

Tyler Dolin, Summer Biological Technician

"Play by Play" of Detroit River Hawk Watch

Greg Norwood, Wildlife Biologist

The team monitoring the extraordinary fall migration of birds-of-prey at Lake Erie Metropark (Jonathan Stein, Andrew Sturgess, Pat Mulawi, Don Sherwood, Rosemary Brady, Rayburn Howland, John Elliot, Joan Tisdale, and Janet Fox) make the work of play-by-play sports announcers look easy. Both are tasked to bring to life events for those who cannot be present. However, while sports announcers juggle the many actions of players on two teams in an outfield, football field, or ice rink, migration monitoring is an even greater test of observational and communication skill. Between September 20-22nd alone, our team recorded 49,209 migrating broad-winged hawks. But there was much more being documented for us during this over-whelming passage of birds. During this same three-day period, counters simultaneously recorded 542 sharp-shinned hawks, and thousands of other migrants, including all birds-of-prey, blue jays, monarch butterflies, and more. Still not convinced of the magnitude of this effort? This team is asked to maintain at least two pairs of eyes on the sky at all times every single day from September 1st to November 30th without pause.

This marathon of migration monitoring is performed for good reason. A complete continual record ensures we are providing a meaningful sample of the migration. This means stronger data from which to contribute to trend analyses, but it also means the rest of us can stay "tuned-in" to one of North America's most awe-inspiring migrations each day.

You can find the day's raw data and summary before mid-night throughout the season at hawkcount.org.

Counters used standard methods to tally 72, 163 broad-winged hawks this September in the same way as previous seasons. The hawks will find their way to central and South America within a few weeks.

Events to Come:

Eagle Tour in partnership with DTE Energy Date TBA
This once a year event allows you to experience the beauty of the bald eagle in its winter habitat. If the river is frozen, expect to see over 50 mature eagles on site. If the waters are open, expect to see the eagles soaring above you as you stand on the marsh dikes, an experience to be remembered. Registration Required. Registration opens the week of Thanksgiving, November 23, closes January 4, 2016. A lottery will be conducted to select participants for the two tours, 9:00 am and 1:00 pm.

Volunteer Outreach Event Date TBA
An evening for those interested in being a part of the growth of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge to learn more on how you can put your time, skills and passion to use for the refuge. A great way to get involved and learn before we open our doors to the public and participate in the first days of the refuge's openings. Come experience wildlife as a volunteer!

Watch your email for more upcoming events over the winter, or visit our websites at: www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river or www.iwralliance.org
Visit us on facebook: www.facebook.com/DetroitRiverIWR or www.facebook.com/IWRA

Announcing Facebook Blue Goose Mondays!

We have a facebook page! Be sure to check us out online for a lot of fun and look out for Blue Goose Mondays! **www.facebook.com/DetroitRiverIWR www.facebook.com/IWRA**

Meet Puddles the Blue Goose!

Symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Puddles was recently interviewed, see what he had to say:

Where are you from?

I'm from the creative mind of Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, the famous editorial cartoonist from Norwood, Michigan.

When were you born?

"Ding" Darling drew me into reality in the early 1930's, I was first debuted at Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota in 1934 and since then I have found my way across the entire country as a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System. You can now see me all along the borders of Wildlife Refuges in all fifty states and some U.S. territories.

What is a National Wildlife Refuge?

It is a network of lands managed under the United States Fish and Wildlife Service under the Department of the Interior. These lands have been set aside for conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plant species and their habitats, for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Where is the closest National Wildlife Refuge to Trenton?

I'm glad you asked! That would be the Detroit River INTERNATIONAL Wildlife Refuge, it is actually the only INTERNATIONAL Wildlife Refuge in North America! If you check out the facebook page you can see me every Monday morning as I do things around the refuge and in the Detroit area.

Wild creatures, like men, must have a place to live. As civilization creates cities, builds highways, and drains marshes, it takes away, little by little, the land that is suitable for wildlife. And as their space for living dwindles, the wildlife populations themselves decline. Refuges resist this trend by saving some areas from encroachment, and by preserving in them, or restoring where necessary, the conditions that wild things need in order to live."

-Rachel Carson, *Author, environmentalist, and former employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She even has a refuge named after her, The Rachel Carson NWR in Maine*

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