Summer 2016

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 first 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 allows significant opportunities for the public to experience fish, wildlife and plants in their natural habitat. The 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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IWRA Office: 734.692.7671

DRIWR Office: 734-362-7736
Visitor Services Email: jody_demeyere@fws.gov

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A Message from the Alliance Chair

The 11th Annual Benefit Dinner to support the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance was held on Saturday, May 14, 2016. It was a "Sold Out" crowd. In spite of the "chilly" weather, the host, Ford Yacht Club on Grosse Ile, made everyone feel at home! Kudos to Brian and Ann Loftus for another Grosse Ile extravaganza!

Richard G. Micka, Chair
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board

Meet Doug Briggs

Our New Zone Officer!

I'm glad to be here at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Since arriving in February, the past few months have flown by as I get oriented to my new job and the area.

About me

My wife and I are both from Ohio and have two children, ages 10 and 7. We have moved all over the country and are excited to finally settle in the area. We enjoy traveling and getting out in nature as much as possible which led me to my career, first with the National Park Service and now with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After working seasonal jobs at Cuyahoga Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks, I got my first permanent position with the National Park Service at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. We later moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee while I worked at the Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park. In 2010, I was fortunate to get a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Morris Wetland Management District in Western Minnesota where we lived until our move to Michigan.

About my new job

As a Zone Officer, my job is to provide law enforcement guidance and support for the refuges and Federal Wildlife Officers in the zone. This includes all refuge lands in Michigan, Ohio, and northern Indiana. I will also provide training for officers in the region at our annual law enforcement training sessions and serve as the lead firearms instructor for the region. All of this is in addition to the more traditional duties of a Federal Wildlife Officer. Please stop and say hello if you see me in the field. I look forward to meeting you and working with everyone to protect this great resource.

Can you guess "Where Steve is"?

Hint: Steve tries to get out in the field as much as possible, but this space is where he will spend most of his time at work. Email your answer to iwr_alliance@yahoo.com. The first correct guess will receive a Nature Store tote bag!

From the Refuge Manager

John Hartig

Realizing the Dream!

Do you remember that in 2002 Wayne County purchased the Refuge Gateway from Chrysler Corporation to become the future home of our Visitor Center and to improve public uses like fishing, environmental education, wildlife observation, kayaking, and more? It then took 10 years to successfully clean up the Refuge Gateway to meet public use standards. Today, we can proudly say that there has been a net gain of over 16 acres of wetlands in an area that has lost 97% of its coastal wetlands to development, restoration of 25 acres of upland buffer habitat, control of invasive plant species on over 50 acres of upland habitats, and control of invasive Phragmites along 2.5 miles of shoreline. This has also resulted in merging of the 44-acre Refuge Gateway with the 410-acre Humbug Marsh into one ecological unit and is helping create a truly exceptional conservation and outdoor recreational experience in a major urban area.

We all can be proud that it is now the only project in the world to have cleaned up and restored habitats in an industrial brownfield sufficiently to serve as an ecological buffer for a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance – Humbug Marsh. This project is now being described as transformational for Metropolitan Detroit because it is helping change the perception of the Detroit River from that of a polluted "rust belt" river to one of an international wildlife refuge that reconnects people to nature, improves quality of life, showcases sustainable redevelopment, and enhances community pride.

Currently, construction of the Visitor Center and the school ship dock and fishing pier are 50-60% and 70% complete, respectively. Construction of both projects will be complete by the end of 2016.

Construction crews installing solar panels on the roof of the Visitor Center, which is now over 50% complete. Photo: FWS

Fishing pier and school ship dock construction is 70% complete! Photo: FWS

Many people still view the Refuge Gateway as a paradox of industry and internationally-recognized wildlife refuge. But it is not. It is a strategically-planned destination of choice consistent with the philosophy of Abraham Lincoln who said: The best way to predict the future is to create it! Thank you all for your significant contributions to making this possible for us to enjoy and benefit from, and for future generations to experience the wonder of nature.

Visitor Service News

Training for Visitor Center Greeter and Nature Store Volunteers Starting This Fall

The Refuge's interactive visitor center will be standing in the dark without YOUR assistance!

Volunteers are needed to assist in operation of the upcoming visitor center and nature store, located in Trenton, MI. As a Visitor Center Greeter and Nature Store Volunteer, you will help visitors connect to refuge lands through a variety of recreational opportunities. If you like interacting with people, both young and old, this is the volunteer position for you!!

Training will begin this fall with informative (and fun!!) tours of Refuge Units throughout Wayne and Monroe counties. Interested volunteer should contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere, directly to be added to her master volunteer list. As the training dates get closer, you will be contacted to confirm your availability. Training dates will include both weekdays and weekends to accommodate everyone interested.

Volunteer duties include: meet and cheerfully greet visitors; provide area and refuge recreation opportunity information; give orientations to the work of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System; assist visitors with refuge rules and regulations; answer telephones; answer visitor questions; respond to visitor correspondences; distribute brochures; and restock brochures. These duties provide volunteers with the opportunity to reach diverse groups of people with a knowledge and appreciation of the environment and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Jody DeMeyere, Visitor Services Manager, (734)692-7649 or jody_demeyere@fws.gov.

11TH ANNUAL
DETROIT RIVER
INTERNATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE
BENEFIT DINNER

IWRA 11th Annual Benefit Dinner Celebrated at the Ford Yacht Club ~ Grosse Isle Michigan

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016

John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Awards and the IWRA 11th Annual Benefit Dinner in support of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) celebrated the continued support for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) with its annual benefit dinner Saturday, May 14thth. The sold out event was held in the Refuge community of Grosse Ile this year at the Ford Yacht Club. The outdoor location provided a striking waterfront view and was shared with 300 friends in conservation.

On Tuesday, May 10th in the same location, three John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Awards were given in recognition of leadership and dedication to conservation on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie Basin. **This year's honorees were:**

Dr. Eugene Jaworski (Individual Award)

"The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has been most fortunate to have the expertise of Dr. Gene Jaworski, professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University.

Dr. Jaworski is an expert in coastal wetland ecology and cartography and has worked with the Refuge since 2009 as the major contributor to the station's ecological inventories and monitoring" noted Greg Norwood, Wildlife Biologist.

Dr. Jaworski completed many detailed maps of the habitat conditions in 2009 using a combination of aerial photo interpretation and ground surveys. These serve as a critical "base-line" condition of the Refuge prior to Refuge habitat management from which staff can evaluate the response of habitat to such things as prescribed fire, invasive species control, and water level changes. His role was instrumental in the "Remote Sensing and Biological Monitoring of Invasive Plant Species and Their Impacts" funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Award to Eastern Michigan University. This study required his skills in aerial imagery interpretation, which resulted in map layers that are used regularly by Refuge staff and partners.

Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival (Non-Profit Award)

Local sportsmen were an important part of the early organization of the DRIWR and IWRA. And, with their help have given the public the opportunity to become aware and recognize the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

A partnership with USFWS of over 10 years has allowed thousands to meet with Refuge and IWRA staff on location at their annual event, the Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival held annually in September in partnership with the State of Michigan DNR, in the heart of the Refuge – for over 68 years. It has supported the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area for as many years and has become a sportsman and Michigan tradition. We are honored to share their passion for conservation and developing the next generation of conservation stewards. For these reasons, we honor the Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival.

Individual Award: Joann Van Aken, IWRA Executive Director, Dr. Eugene Jaworski, Greg Norwood, Wildlife Biologist, Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

Non-Profit Award: Bob Kemper, Mike Beach, Mark Beach, Joe Boudrie, Shauna Nietubicz, Robert Whitwam, Fred Bowman, Bill Barrow and Richard Whitwam

Corporate Award: Bob Kemper, Mike Beach, Mark Beach, Joe Boudrie, Shauna Nietubicz, Robert Whitwam, Fred Bowman, Bill Barrow and Richard Whitwam

DTE Energy Monroe Power Plant Eagle Tour (Corporate Award)

The DTE Energy Monroe Power Plant has been partnering with the USFWS International Wildlife Refuge since 2010 when it held the first public Eagle Tour. January 2016 marked their sixth tour. The Monroe Power Plant staff and DTE Energy employees allow public access to private wildlife habitat properties, which act as roosting habitat for overwintering bald eagles. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge visitor services staff and IWRA, with a University of Michigan Naturalist, have worked with DTE Energy employees to offer a lucky few an experience they will long remember. Sixty people are chosen by a lottery draw from a pool of over 2,000 applications to witness first-hand the hundreds of bald eagles in their natural habitat.

The tour has had an impact on the participants who have been heard to speak positively of their experience and are beyond grateful. This one day event, on a cold and often snowy January Saturday has become a much sought after experience from people not just from local communities, but from many neighboring states and Canada. "With DTE Energy's Monroe Power Plant's involvement, the Refuge has a quality partner, allowing for a unique education and outreach opportunity that has garnered a lot of positive publicity over the years" said Molly Luempert-Coy, Regional Manager for DTE Energy. It is our honor to present the 2016 Corporate Friend of the Refuge Award to the DTE Energy Monroe Power Plant.

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Adventures of an Urban Refuge Intern

By Erica Pozner

My internship at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has brought me countless experiences. I've gotten to work with so many wonderful people and learn so much especially with the Visitor Service team on numerous projects. The first to mention is in researching the local school demographics to help them decide which school the refuge would partner with based on the number of students in each grade and MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) science scores.

Another project I worked on involved researching local community leaders for more partnership opportunities with the refuge. But, the one project that I really enjoyed was the homeschool activity kits. After researching environmental education program books, like Project Wet and Project Wild, I suggested activities that I thought would be appropriate to teach on the refuge. Once the activities were selected by the visitor services staff, I made an inventory of what materials were needed and then put the kits together. These kits will allow a homeschool teacher to choose an activity based on a brief description, what will be in the kit, and the amount of time it will take to complete the activity. From there they can pick which kit they will take out and use it on the refuge.

By far my favorite thing to do, is help the visitor service team with open house and outreach events. Those types of events are a fun way to connect people to the refuge. One outreach event I really enjoyed was Shiver on the River, which took place on Belle Isle in Detroit. I got to meet and talk to all kinds of interesting individuals, and I also ran the educational games for the kids to play. A favorite event? The Eagle Tour, where I drove one of the vehicles carrying the lucky people who won the lottery to see eagles in their natural habitat. I answered any questions the winners had and got to see an incredible amount of eagles.

With this internship coming to an end it is bittersweet, I am sad that it is ending but I am happy for the experiences it gave me and the wonderful people I met. All of the wonderful people at Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge made this internship so remarkable. Although my time as an intern at DRIWR has come to an end, my time as a volunteer is far from over.

Erica poses with a bow during staff archery training. Photo: FWS

Humbug Marsh Lottery

Archery White-tailed Deer Hunt Coming Fall 2016

If you have driven down West Jefferson recently, you have probably noticed the new visitor center construction moving forward. You may also have seen a large number of dark eyes, big ears and white tails looking back at you too! Few would argue the Humbug Marsh Unit's white-tailed deer herd is above the "cultural carrying capacity." The high risk of deer-vehicle collisions are a concern, the Refuge habitat is highly over-browsed, and the beauty and mystique of white-tailed deer - a feature that ensures quality experiences for the public - is lost as they have become accustomed to human interaction.

The Refuge has been working behind–the-scenes to provide the public a fair and equitable structure to annually harvest deer, while ensuring a quality and safely conducted hunt. Inevitably, there will be endless debate on the appropriate number of deer within this urban forest that meet the desire to hunt and view them, with the risk they pose as described above. Therefore, a transparent, science-based approach to their management is critical so that objective, quantifiable information can readily be provided to the public. We look forward to doing this in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

Here are a few specifics to get you ready to apply for this hunt:

- A limited number of archery-only hunting permits are available for ten antlerless deer hunts within the Humbug Marsh Unit of the Refuge. Each hunt is two days.
- Interested hunters may apply for one deer reserved hunting permit from July 15 – August 15 at any license agent, MDNR Customer Service Center, or online at www.mdnr-elicense.com. There is a $5 application fee.
- There is not a specific youth hunt. Youths 10-16 must be accompanied by an adult. A non-hunting adult accompanying a youth cannot possess or carry a bow and does not need a deer hunting license. Adults do not need to fill out an application for the youth hunt unless the adult and youth are applying as partners.
- You may apply in a partnership with one other person. Each applicant receives a party ID. Ensure your partner has the same party ID when they apply.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining their drawing results online. Refuge specific hunt information will be provided by Detroit River IWR to selected applicants through U.S. Mail after the drawing.
- Any leftover permits will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no fee for the permit. Only one permit, per person for deer reserved hunting, independent of whether or not you received a reserved permit through the drawing.
- Hunters who possess a deer reserved hunting permit (either through the lottery or as a leftover permit) for DRIWR may purchase two "bonus" antlerless-only Managed Deer Hunt permits for $20 each, valid only for this lottery hunt.

Any additional questions can be sent to Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere, at jody_demeyere@fws.gov.

Calendar of Events
JULY THROUGH NOVEMBER 2016

July 9, Saturday
Taste of Stewardship Volunteer Work Day
(Humbug Marsh Unit) 9am - Noon
We will be offering a morning of learning and working on the refuge open to the public to anyone willing to work hard and learn. From 9:00am-12:00pm we will take you out on the Humbug unit of the refuge and show you how our stewardship crew manages the habitat. Registration required. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere at jody_demeyere@fws.gov or call at 734-692-7649 to register.

July 9, Saturday
Guided Tour of Refuge Units 9am – Noon and 1pm – 4pm
Take a guided tour of four refuge units: Refuge Gateway, site of the future visitor center and fishing pier, Humbug Marsh, Strong and Brancheau. Learn how managers are removing invasive species, getting ready for self-guided visitation and managing hunters. Bring your binoculars and your questions. Possibly Osprey viewing at one of the units! Registration required. Limited to 30 participants per tour. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere at jody_demeyere@fws.gov or call at 734-692-7649 to register.

July 9, Saturday
Open House at Humbug Marsh 1pm – 4pm
Come visit Humbug Marsh trails for an afternoon, visit the gem at your backdoor. Bring the whole family. Enjoy the trails at your own pace or take a guided forest hike. The Wyandot of Anderson tribe will have artifacts and regalia on display at the education shelter.

July 14, Thursday
Guided Lotus Hike
(Gibraltar Bay Unit, Grosse Ile) 5pm – 7pm
Join the Visitor Services Team on the Gibraltar Bay Unit for a guided lotus viewing hike. Walk the trails and discover the beauty of this refuge unit! Come for a portion or the entire event.

July 29, Friday
Kayak the Detroit River
Learn about the refuge as you paddle by in kayaks! Cost is $35 per person, includes kayak, paddle, vest. If you have your own, $15 per person, registration required. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere at jody_demeyere@fws.gov or call at 734-692-7649 to register.

August 6, Saturday
Wildlife Skills Event
(Gibraltar Bay Unit, Grosse Ile) 10am - Noon
Join the Visitor Services Team on the Gibraltar Bay Unit for a variety of wildlife skills games. Walk the trails and discover the beauty of this refuge unit! Come for a portion or the entire event.

August 6, Saturday
Open House at Humbug Marsh 1pm – 4pm
Come visit Humbug Marsh trails for an afternoon, visit the gem at your backdoor. Bring the whole family. Enjoy the trails at your own pace or take a guided forest hike. A variety of family friendly wildlife skills games will be available for everyone to test their knowledge.

August 6, Saturday
Taste of Stewardship Volunteer Work Day
(Humbug Marsh Unit) 9am - Noon
We will be offering a morning of learning and working on the refuge open to the public to anyone willing to work hard and learn. From 9:00am-12:00pm we will take you out on the Humbug unit of the refuge and show you how our stewardship crew manages the habitat. Registration required. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere at jody_demeyere@fws.gov or call at 734-692-7649 to register.

September 17 & 18, Saturday and Sunday
Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival
Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Brownstown, MI. Enjoy a Michigan tradition of games, raffles, food, and prizes – Goose & Duck Calling, "Jump Dogs", Midwest Decoy Contest, Wildlife Art & Craft show are just a few features of the two-day event. www.miwaterfowlfest.org

September 17 & 18, Saturday and Sunday
Annual Hawkfest Weekend at Lake Erie Metropark
A two-day celebration of the annual fall migration of birds of prey – hawks, eagles, falcons, and vultures. Each September, thousands of broad-winged hawks pass over this area designated as one of the premier hawk watching sites in North America. Typically, 200,000 birds of prey migrate over Lake Erie Metropark from September through November on their southward journey. The event will be held at the Marshlands Museum and Nature Center of Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown Township. (A Metroparks vehicle entry permit is required to enter Lake Erie Metropark $5). www.metroparks.com

September 24, Saturday
Monarch Event (Gibraltar Bay Unit, Grosse Ile) 10am - Noon
Join the Visitor Services Team on the Gibraltar Bay Unit for a variety of monarch and pollinator games. Walk the trails and discover the beauty of this refuge unit! Come for a portion or the entire event.

September 24, Saturday
Open House at Humbug Marsh 1pm – 4pm
Come visit Humbug Marsh trails for an afternoon, visit the gem at your backdoor. Bring the whole family. Enjoy the trails at your own pace and as well as a variety of monarch themed activities. Local butterfly expert, Karen Hoffman, will have a number of local butterflies in all stages of metamorphosis. Visitors will be encouraged to take an up close look and discover ways they could create pollinator habitat in their own yards.

November 18, Friday
Owl Prowl 7pm – 9pm
Join us was we "speak" the language of owl. A guided walk on the unit trails will hopefully be accompanied by many calls. Fun for the entire family. Registration required. Limited to 30 participants. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere at jody_demeyere@fws.gov or call at 734-692-7649 to register.

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**

Visitor Services News:

Prepare Yourself for Open Gates!

We get asked all the time, "When will refuge units be open to the public?" The answer we always give is "Soon." Yet the answer is just a bit more complicated. Policy requires the Refuge to have a Visitor Services Plan (VSP) in place to guide the direction of public use over the next 15 years. For the keen observers among you, this planning project has been on the "What's Next?" portion of each Annual Report for many years. So if you were listening very closely this past February, you may have heard some of the Refuge staff whooping and hollering because the VSP has finally been approved!

This now unbinds our hands and allows us to begin opening units for self-guided exploration, from dawn to dusk, 365-days a year. The Gibraltar Bay Unit on Grosse Ile is now open. Dogs are welcomed as long as they are on a leash, but no fishing is allowed. Many thanks go to the Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy for their support of this unit over the years. Peter Kantz and Art Payette have led the Stewardship Crew to remove invasive species, create trails and maintain the character of the unit. In addition, the GINLC have hosted Open Houses events every Sunday from May through October. Their efforts have allowed visitors to explore the unit before we officially opened.

Additional units will open as parking and orientation facilities are constructed. Unfortunately, the much anticipated Humbug Marsh Unit will not open until the visitor center construction is completed. An Open House will be held each month from May through September for those who would like a sneak peak!

So lace up your hiking boots and grab your binoculars. Spring and summer should be exciting months for those interested in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge...See you there!

The Gibraltar Bay Unit is ready for you!
Gates now open from dawn until dusk.
Dogs welcomed on a leash.
No fishing allowed.

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