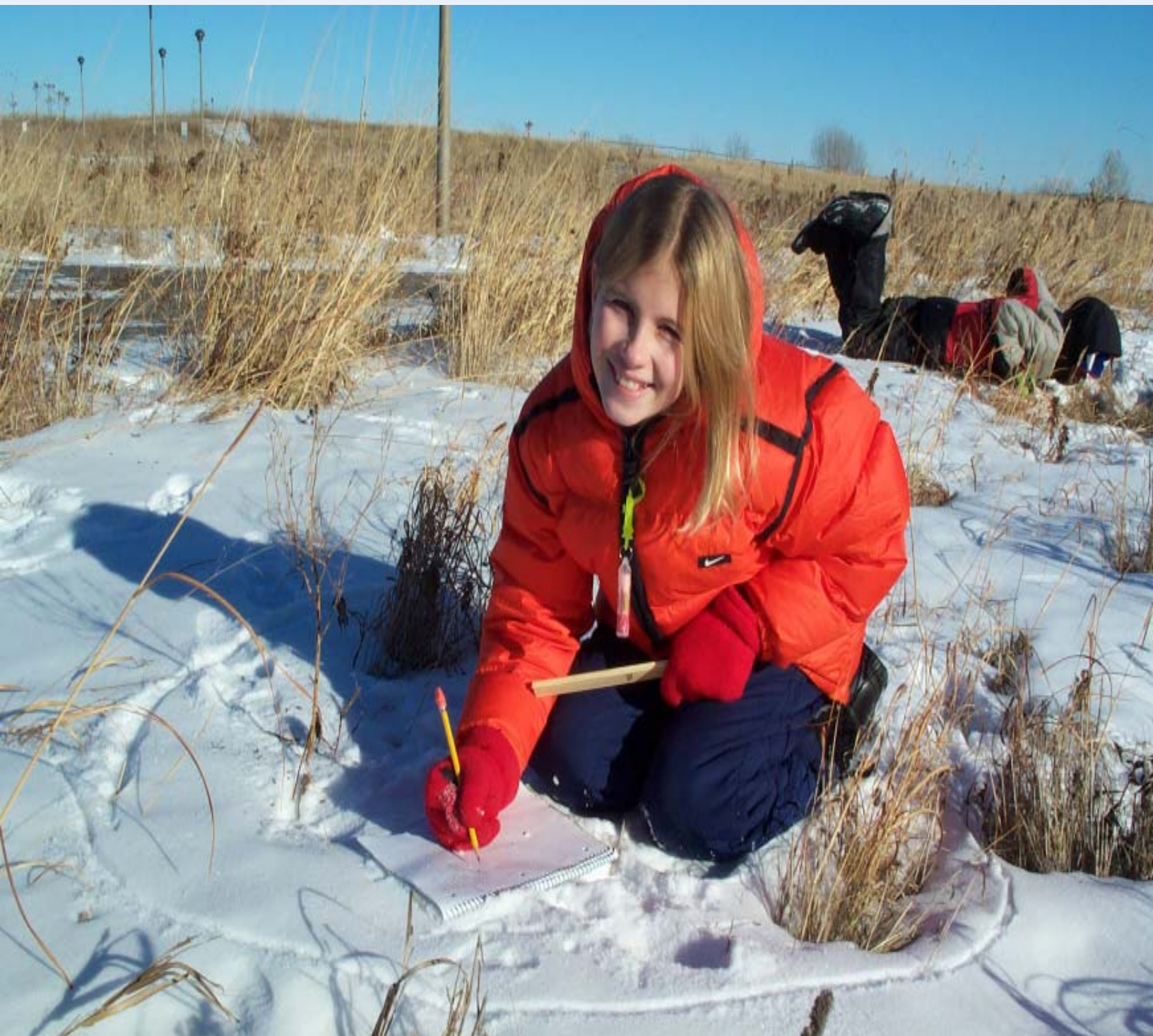




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Region 3 Children and Nature

A Midwestern Approach to Solving Nature Deficit Disorder



Children and Nature Accomplishments in Region 3

Most field stations in Region 3 conduct or participate in activities directed toward engaging children in the natural world. Through environmental education and interpretive programs we are able to provide information about nature and how it functions, but even more importantly our national wildlife refuges, wetland management districts and fish hatcheries provide access to the natural world for children and their families. And our employees in every program—from Ecological Services to Joint Ventures—serve as ambassadors for the Fish and Wildlife Service, participating in community events that reach thousands of children each year. Below are highlights from recent years.

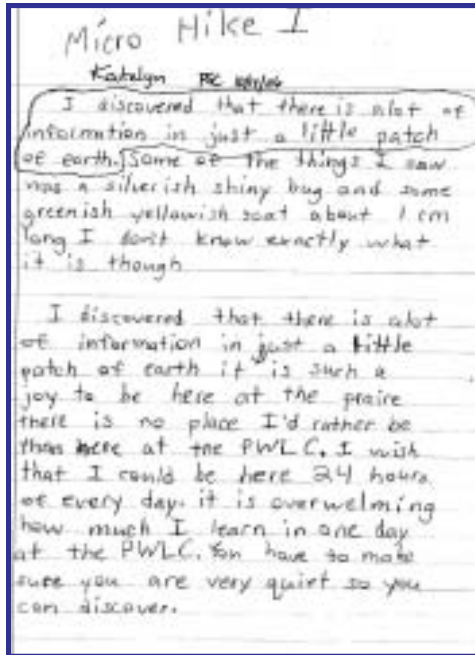
Fergus Falls Wetland Management District: Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

In its third year, the Prairie Science Class comprises 100 fifth grade students from the town of Fergus Falls, Minn. They attend school for a half day every day of the school year at the Prairie Wetland Learning Center located on the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. Each school day has the students outside learning. This interdisciplinary program uses the natural resources—the prairie ecosystem—to teach math, writing and science. The education philosophy of this program is to provide the student with interdisciplinary, experiential learning through authentic field-based experiences.



-USFWS
A Prairie Science Class student from Fergus Falls, Minnesota, carefully examines his discovery.

On the cover: Children participating in the Prairie Science Class. USFWS photo.



Letter from a Prairie Science Class participant.

Junior Duck Stamp Program Reaches Thousands

Celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2007, the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program is a dynamic educational program designed to teach wetland habitat and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school. The Junior Duck Stamp Program is loosely based on the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp—the “Duck Stamp”—in that, following state and national art competitions among participants in the program, the winning art, chosen by a panel of five judges, is made into a stamp that is sold by the U.S. Postal

Service. The proceeds from each \$5 Junior Duck Stamp support conservation education and provide awards and scholarships for participating teachers and students.

In the Midwest Region, all eight states participate in the Junior Duck Stamp program. In seven states, the Junior Duck Stamp State Coordinator is located at a national wildlife refuge; in the remaining state (Illinois), the coordinator is a state Department of Natural Resources employee who works closely with an Ecological Services field outreach specialist as well as an employee at a national wildlife refuge. A regional coordinator located in External Affairs provides support to the state coordinators.

In 2005, 4,115 students from the Midwest Region participated in the Junior Duck Stamp program. This includes students from public and private schools and art schools, as well as a growing number of homeschoolers.



-USFWS
Pictured are some of Minnesota's Junior Duck Stamp program participants.

Fish are More and More Fun at Jordan River NFH

The evening outreach program “Fish are Fun,” held at the Jordan River NFH during the winter, is so popular that staff have been offered a road show venue. The last program in the series held at the hatchery, *Exotic Invaders*, attracted an entire Boy Scout troop.

Biologist Tim Smigielski puts on the programs and will likely be doing more shows for much larger crowds. Jon Sumner, the leader for Boy Scouts of America in Northern Michigan, was so impressed with the hatchery programs that he is willing to provide ushers, refreshments, and even an auditorium to put on interpretive programs for the public in a nearby community. This will be a new, innovative, and low cost way of advancing the mission, promoting Fish and Wildlife Service programs, and educating the public. The first pilot event is slated for this spring.

Rod Bragg, a teacher from St Mary’s School in Gaylord, Mich., was also impressed with the presentations and immediately scheduled tours for two of his classes that very same day. Bragg, along with several interested parents and 24 eighth graders, toured the station, saw a fin clipping demonstration, and enjoyed a presentation about recreational fishing and its connection to the hatchery and the Great Lakes. The second group, an afternoon class of juniors and seniors from the high school, toured the hatchery and learned about careers in fisheries and the Fish and Wildlife Service.



-USFWS Screenshot by Tim Smigielski
Tim Smigielski produced *Exotic Invaders* presentation has been a hit with children visiting the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery for the *Fish Are Fun* program.

Fur, Fish, Fun, and 4-H

Susan Wells of the Alpena FRO presented information on aquatic habitat conservation and restoration to 60 seventh grade students at the 4-H *Fish, Fur, Fish, and Fun* day. The event was hosted by the Michigan State University Extension and Rogers City School District. The presentation provided information on causes of aquatic habitat deterioration and emphasized activities people can do to reduce or eliminate these causes. Wells highlighted examples of aquatic habitat restoration techniques such as the use of biodegradable coir logs and filter fabric to reduce sedimentation in streams. Each of the students were given a chance to handle these fabrics and given materials describing the importance of habitat to aquatic organisms.

Learning to Walk on Water

The statement, “And the safest way to walk on water is....” opened a presentation by Whittlesey Creek NWR’s Katie Goodwin to three of Sherry Collins’ physical education classes at Washburn High School in Washburn, Wis. The students got a lesson on ice safety and ice rescue before venturing on the frozen Chequamegon Bay on Lake Superior, for an ice fishing session. Additional instructors included Glenn Miller of the Ashland FRO, Pam Dryer and Mike Mylnarek of the Whittlesey Creek NWR, and Matt Symbol of the Red Cliff Tribe Natural Resources Department.

Approximately 60 students attended the sessions, and even though they caught no fish and raised no “fish-on” flags—except for the occasional “tripping” of a flag by one of the class jokers—the students had a good time learning the fundamentals of ice fishing. Collins has a unique approach in teaching her junior and senior classes the different aspects of winter-time activities by hands-on experience. The class had previously participated in snow shoeing, downhill, and cross county skiing.



-USFWS
Students from the Washburn High School in Washburn, Wis. received a lesson on ice safety and ice rescue from Fish and Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Red Cliff Tribe Natural Resources Department.

Reaching Out to Local Educators

Cathy Carnes and Leakhena Au of the Green Bay, Wis., Field Office staffed an outreach booth at the Northeast Wisconsin Education Associations Teachers Convention. Several hundred teachers and educators from northeast Wisconsin attending the conference stopped by their booth to pick up information about endangered species, migratory birds, wildlife and wetlands. The field office maintains a library of teaching aids available for loan to local educators. Several hundred educators in northeast Wisconsin were made aware of the work of the Service and the outreach and educational materials available to them at Green Bay Field Office. This was the Service's eighth year participating at the convention.

Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership

The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) is an international coalition of public and private groups that is reintroducing endangered whooping cranes in eastern North America, which was once a part of their historic range. Thanks to WCEP's efforts, there are now 81 migratory whooping cranes in the wild in eastern North America — including the first whooping crane chick to hatch in the wild in Wisconsin in more than a century. The Fish and Wildlife Service is a founding member of WCEP and continues to be a leader in coordinating and executing the group's outreach and education efforts. Since 2001, WCEP's direct educational activities at schools, national wildlife refuges, community centers and in other locations have reached some 20,000 children. Further, WCEP partners with Journey North, an

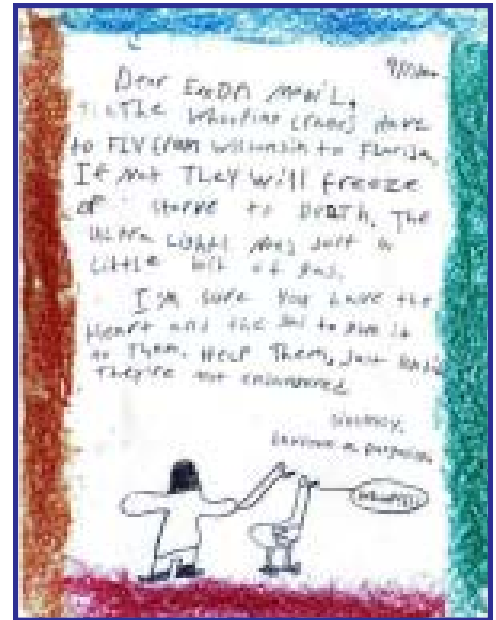
environmental education organization that features WCEP activities on its Web site. Journey North's Web-based conservation activities annually reach some 400,000 children in 11,000 schools.



Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership: Thank you letter after a school presentation.

Whooping Crane Reintroduction Inspires Children to Get Involved

The success of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership has inspired bird lovers and conservationists around the world. It also inspired some children to take up their pens in support of Operation Migration, the nonprofit WCEP partner that flies the ultralight aircraft used in the reintroduction. Lori Trout and her students at the John F. Kennedy Montessori School in Louisville, Ky., decided to help get the whooping crane "Class of 2006" from Wisconsin to Florida. The children wrote to the CEO of ExxonMobil to ask for the company's help in providing fuel for the ultralights. Operation Migration posted some of the letters on its Web site and encouraged children everywhere to write to ExxonMobil.



A child's letter to ExxonMobil

A Vision: Creating a Community of "Junior Conservationists"

As the nation's primary federal Agency responsible for perpetuating healthy fish and wildlife populations for future generations to enjoy, a key component of mission success for the Fish and Wildlife Service involves working with youth of all ages to educate them in the art and science of fish and wildlife conservation. One way to do this is through a "Junior Conservationist" program the might include the following elements:

- Create an awareness and association of the title Junior Conservationist with the Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Use Fish and Wildlife Service resource-related material to build a multi-section, on-line environmental education curriculum focusing on students ages K through 12. Similar to other on-line training/education programs, provide "certificates of completion" for each section.
- Reach out and recruit teachers and students across the coun-

try to participate in the program.

- Maintain the community of junior conservationists by sending out quarterly newsletters/updates via e-mail.
- Establish milestones within the junior conservationist title (apprentice, journeyman, master, etc.) as a way to motivate students to achieve. At the higher levels, provide opportunities for “expressed” conservation projects — a refuge or hatchery might provide volunteer opportunities where the junior conservationist could get “credit” for building a wood duck house, collecting prairie seed, picking-up trash or performing another task. The highest levels of achievement might involve independently designing and organizing a community action campaign around an issue in which the Fish and Wildlife Service is involved.

Celebrating the Winter Season at WinterFest

Alpena FRO biologist Susan Wells participated in WinterFest, a day long winter fun festival at the Sprinkler Lake Education Center in Harrisville, Mich. There were interactive science displays, dog sled rides, crafts and a petting zoo. The Alpena FRO hosted a booth at the event with educational material and fish puzzles, and also partnered with the Pine River Watershed Coalition to operate an interactive watershed model depicting the path of sediments and pollutants after a rain event when buffers such as trees and wetlands are lost. Approximately 700 children and adults visited the booth. The festival allowed the Alpena FRO the opportunity to fulfill one

of the station goals of distributing information to the general public about fish and wildlife resources, natural ecosystems, and programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service.



-USFWS

WinterFest in Michigan

Girl Scouts and Service Restore Prairie Habitat and Create an Environmental Education Site

Hillary Blevins from Girl Scouts of the Mississippi Valley and Kraig McPeck from the Rock Island Field Office are collaborating to ensure the health and growth of a restored prairie habitat at Girl Scouts of the Mississippi Valley’s Camp Conestoga, near New Liberty, Iowa. They are working to develop a prairie education curriculum for the nearly 1,000 girls ages 5-17 and adults attending Girl Scout events and resident camp in summer 2006 and for Girl Scout troops or groups participating in year-round camping. Through hands-on environmental education activities and service projects, girls will become leaders and stewards of conservation and natural resource issues, networking with agency staff to explore

careers in science, environmental science, and the outdoors and understanding the importance of safeguarding native habitats. Money for the project came from the Partners for Wildlife program and from a National Girl Scout Grant program that teams Girl Scout money with natural resource agency money to provide conservation and environmental education opportunities.

Carterville FRO Educates and Entertains Local Scouts

Carterville FRO biologist Colby Wrasse and Illinois DNR biologist Chris Bickers made a presentation to a group of approximately 30 Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. Held at Crab Orchard NWR, the presentation covered such topics as the importance of fish to the ecosystem and people, fish diversity, fish management practices, and conservation ethics. Pictures of large, unique fish fascinated the scouts and generated many excellent questions. The highlight of the day was a live fish demonstration. Scouts were able to get a close up view of 15 fish common to Crab Orchard NWR as Bickers and Wrasse described fish physiology and the unique characteristics of each. The scouts appreciated the opportunity to hold and touch the fish, many of which they had never seen before. The day culminated as the scouts happily released the fish back to the lake. All the participants seemed to enjoy the presentation and hopefully learned a little in the process. Events such as this tend to increase young peoples’ interests in our natural resources and will lead to a conservation-minded society.

Service Teams with Newspaper to Help Kids Go Batty

The Herald-Times, of Bloomington, Ind., is sponsoring a yearlong project to get local school students involved in studying the federally endangered Indiana bat. Partners in this project are the Fish and Wildlife Service's Bloomington Field Office, the U.S. Forest Service, the Indiana Karst Conservancy and the Hoosier Hills chapter of Bat World.

The Bat Project was launched with an essay contest to determine which classrooms would get to participate. Three classes in grades 4-7 at Monroe County schools were selected. Throughout the year the students have conducted an in-depth study of the Indiana bat, including classroom visits by bat and cave experts. The students quickly learned that bats are misunderstood and disliked by many people, and the kids are anxious to do their part to help educate people about bats. Each week, one of the classrooms prepares a column for a weekly Herald-Times feature called "Bat File." They have also planned other activities ranging from a bat festival to a book of bat poetry to share their new-found knowledge of bats.

The Bloomington Field Office has enthusiastically supported the effort, providing "bat trunks" to the three classrooms — filled with bat books, videos, posters, and lots of fun bat oddities including a bat cookie cutter — and making biologists available as a resource to the students and teachers throughout the year. It has been fun and exciting to watch the students' progress through the year and to see the complexity of their questions grow. A fifth grade class from Edgewood Intermediate

School sent biologists a question regarding a formula they found for calculating the maximum migration range of a bat — that one sent us scrambling to some technical sources to find them an answer.

Students involved in the project have developed a strong sense of stewardship toward the Indiana bat. Indiana caves support half of the rangewide population of the Indiana bat, so the students know that conservation efforts in Indiana are essential to species survival. They also understand that outreach and education in Indiana are an important aspect of developing support for those conservation efforts, and they are dedicated to being part of that outreach.



-USFWS photo by Lori Pruitt

Edgewood Junior High students display bat outreach materials.

Historical Black College Fair

The East Lansing, Mich., Field Office participated in the Ninth Annual City-Wide Historical Black College Fair in Detroit. This growing faith-based effort brings together parents, community leaders, Historical Black College and University recruiters, youth education organizations, after-school programs and vendors to benefit the 1,000 eighth to twelfth graders who attended, coming from as far away as Chicago. Service biologist Bob Kavetsky staffed a booth focusing on the mission of the Fish and Wildlife

Service, providing information about the Student Career Experience Program and careers in natural resources to students and parents.

Mancelona Schools Students Tour Jordan River Hatchery

On a sunny Tuesday in April, 66 fifth graders from the Mancelona Middle School toured the Jordan River NFH. The students were on site for 1 ½ hours learning about cold water fish culture, lake trout rehabilitation, fish identification, and fish anatomy. The students from three fifth grade classes were led by biologists John Johnston and Paul Haver. Biologist Tim Smigielski showed a presentation on Great Lakes trout and salmon identification. Connie Brigham, a chaperone and organizer of the trip, was impressed and urged the students to return to the hatchery another day with family and friends.



-USFWS Screenshot

Tim Smigielski, with the assistance of other Jordan River National Fish Hatchery staff, has developed presentations and programs that have taken the hatchery outreach program to a new level.

“People Eat That?”

When my scalpel opened up the belly of the sturgeon, the ripe black roe oozed from the incision. “What is that black stuff!,” exclaimed one child. I replied it was the eggs of the sturgeon. Also known as roe, which is processed into caviar, a delicacy in some cultures, to which the child replied “Gross! People eat that?”

Paxton-Keeley Elementary School sits adjacent to the Columbia FRO office providing the opportunity to partner in education with area children. Last year, we invited the first grade classes to see some of the fish from the Missouri River. The students and teachers of the school expressed their desire to learn more about fish in the second grade so we stepped it up a notch.

This year the students learned about the physical characteristics of different animals and how they are adapted to living in various surroundings. Jennifer Johnson, Andy Roberts (malacologist with Columbia Ecological Services Field Office), and Jeff Finley displayed a variety of different body forms of fish and mussels found in the Missouri River. More than 100 students watched a video about lures used by mussels, handled different mussel shells, and learned the body forms and important organs of Asian carp, smallmouth buffalo, paddlefish, river carpsucker, and shovelnose sturgeon during a dissection exercise.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work closely with our neighbors and the students and staff of Paxton-Keeley Elementary. It is a joy to partner with our local schools and shape the minds of tomorrow’s natural resource managers.



-USFWS photo by Andy Starostka
Children from a Paxton-Keeley Elementary 2nd grade class look on as biologist Jeff Finley dissects a female shovelnose sturgeon. The black eggs of the sturgeon were particularly fascinating to the children.

Another Day with Wildlife

On April 2, biologist Jennifer Johnson and technician Dustin Martin represented the Fish and Wildlife Service at the city of Columbia, Mo., annual “A Day with Wildlife” celebration. This marks the second year Columbia FRO has participated in the event, organized by the Missouri Department of Conservation and featuring booths from government natural resources agencies and non-government organizations related to natural resources. Popular activities include archery and marksmanship workshops along with a children’s fishing clinic. This free event provides local residents an opportunity to enjoy a fine spring day and explore the numerous outdoor activities that Missouri has to offer.

The Columbia FRO uses the event to promote the goals and current activities of the Fisheries program. Jennifer and Dustin displayed a workboat and trawl equipment used in Missouri River fisheries projects and live shovelnose sturgeon, allowing kids to get up close and personal with this odd looking fish. This gave biologists a chance to educate attendees on general life history characteristics

of river fish and what role they play in the river ecosystem. Jennifer and Dustin fielded questions from visitors regarding current station activities such as the Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Project, Habitat Assessment Project, and mitigation efforts along the Missouri River.



-USFWS photo by Dustin Martin
Biologist Jennifer Johnson talks about shovelnose sturgeon at the 2006 A Day With Wildlife.

Students Learn Importance of Biodiversity

Marquette, Mich., area fifth-grade students gathered for a three-day educational and fun program at Bay Cliff Health Camp, where Fish and Wildlife Service personnel presented information on the importance of biodiversity and how the sea lamprey and other aquatic invasive species have a significant negative effects on the health and economy of the Great Lakes ecosystem. More than 100 students learned that aquatic organisms have evolved into specialized body shapes with specialized appendages over time and also enjoyed knowing why the adaptations complement the existence of each type of organism in specific habitats within the aquatic community.

African-Americans in Science Family Event at the Minnesota Science Museum

Service Biologist Carlita Payne and Human Resource Specialist Elizabeth Franklin presented “Pack Tracks – Preserving Wilderness Saves Wildlife” at the Science Museum of Minnesota for the Annual African-Americans in Science family event. Fifty African-American scientists, engineers, educators and other professionals representing 22 science-based institutions shared rewarding and exciting aspects of their careers with kids of all ages through experiments and hands-on activities.

“Pack Tracks” emphasized the return of the gray wolf to Minnesota’s wilderness. Payne and Franklin assisted children and adults in creating placemats using stickers, stamps and imagination. Posters and an adult wolf pelt were prominently displayed. Visitors to the Service’s area received information and goodies such as cut-out adult wolf masks (courtesy of International Wolf Center) and coloring/item-search pages about wolves in the wilderness (courtesy of Timber Wolf Alliance), wolf and “*Grassland Birds of the Midwest*” posters, bookmarks, “*Sharing the Land with Wolves*” and “*A Guide for Reducing Conflict Between Wolves and Hunting Dogs*” brochures, Service programs and recruitment brochures, and pencils.

This event provided a great venue to share with many of the 4,517 visitors information about the Service’s Endangered Species Program, efforts to conserve wildlife and plants in their communities, and how to avoid conflicts with wolves, in addition to employment and volunteer opportunities with the Service.

2006 Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness and Earth Day Event

Fisheries and Ecological Services staff in Michigan participated in the Earth Day Celebration and “Bring Your Child to Work Day” event in Lansing, Mich. Heather Rawlings of the Alpena FRO and Bob Kavetsky of the East Lansing FO provided information on invasive species awareness, and the USGS Hammond Bay Biological Station provided the sea lamprey, an invasive fish species. The event was hosted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to educate school-aged students about the Earth’s resources and environmental issues. More than 500 children attended, some with parents and some with school group. This activity was a great opportunity to partner with state conservation programs to provide a unified approach and public education about aquatic invasive species.



-USFWS photo by Heather Rawlings
Bob Kavetsky educates students about invasive species during the Aquatic Species Awareness and Earth Day event held on April 20 in Lansing, Michigan. Alpena Fishery Resources Office and East Lansing Field Office staffed the event which was hosted by several State of Michigan agencies.

Earth Day Career Presentation

Ken Stromborg of the Green Bay Field Office gave presentations on wildlife biology and environmental contaminants to two classes at Oconto High School, Oconto, Wis., as part of the “Learning for Life” program, which uses local professionals to illustrate various career paths available to young people. The students were quite attentive and asked a wide range of good questions, and the timing of these presentations was a fortuitous lead in to Earth Day the following week. Approximately 40 high school sophomores had the chance to interact with a professional resource manager as part of a continuing series of career awareness presentations.

Students at Baird Elementary Learn about Endangered Species

Leakhena Au, of the Green Bay Field Office, visited Baird Elementary to talk to 3rd and 4th graders about endangered species. Students learned about why species can become endangered or extinct and some actions they could take (or not take) to help species stay off the endangered species list.

Einstein Science Expo in Green Bay, Wis.

The Fish and Wildlife Service participated in the annual Einstein Science Expo in Green Bay, Wis., hosted by The Einstein Project, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to improving the quality of science, mathematics and technology education for K-12 students in Wisconsin. Some 3,000 children and adults attended the expo on a cold, snowy winter Saturday in January. Green Bay Field Office biologist Colette Charbonneau handed out fish and wildlife goodies to the kids and answered questions regarding fish, endangered species and the natural resource damage assessment restoration that is taking place in the Fox River and Green Bay watershed.

Chicago Field Office Assists Students with Environmental Field Studies

The Chicago Field Office assists students in grades five to twelve involved in a variety of outdoor field studies designed to enhance existing curriculums of local schools and correlate to the state learning standards. Students are provided hands-on experiences with equipment and techniques routinely used by environmental scientists. Many school districts are able to use nearby sites, eliminating the need for expensive all-day field trips. The field office's Environmental Education Specialist served as an instructor for field studies with eight schools, involving approximately 366 students throughout the metro area. Field studies included macro invertebrate sampling to determine water quality, site assessments to analyze habitat quality and wildlife use, migratory bird identification, and surveys of plant communities.

Field Biologist Active in Bringing Children in Michigan Closer to Nature

Tameka Dandridge of the East Lansing, Mich., Field Office frequently attends outreach events designed to bring children—and adults—closer to their natural world. She also spends time in local schools, giving presentations to children of all ages. Dandridge represented the East Lansing Field Office at the Gardner Elementary School Career Day in Detroit, speaking to 4th and 6th grade science students about endangered and threatened species, wildlife biology and her career with the Fish and Wildlife Service. “The teacher and students were all very interested and fascinated with my career and also had lots of questions,” Dandridge reported. “What I found very interesting was, like me when I was their age, the children are very interested in wildlife, but have not had any opportunity to experience it and the only exposure they have had to non-urban wildlife is the local zoo or television such as National Geographic, Animal Planet and Discovery Channel.” Dandridge participated in the annual Arbor Day celebration at Potter Park in Lansing, Mich., discussing with students the importance of fire to the endangered Kirtland's warbler and the jack pine ecosystem, and demonstrating how the cones of the jack pine depend on fire to release its seeds. She also provided bat related outreach activities at the Great Lakes Bat Festival at the Cranbrook Institute Science in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Kids Fishing Day Held at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center

Joan Bratley, Ted Koehler, Gary Czypinski, Jonathan Pyatskowitz, Jess Krajniak, and Mark Dryer of the Ashland FRO contributed their time and talents to a successful presentation of activities for Kids Fishing Day at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland, Wis. The event was organized by Whittlesey Creek NWR and the U.S. Forest Service, which both have offices at the center. Kids learned how to identify fish, where fish live, what fish eat, and how to catch and release fish. An estimated 275 kids and their parents participated. Fishing in the center's pond was slow, but the great weather, attendance, programs, and instruction made the day a huge success. Iron River NFH provided the fish for the fishing pond.



-USFWS

Project Leader Mark Dryer of the Ashland Fishery Resources Office helps a child during one of the many activities offered during the Kids Fishing Day event held at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center near Ashland.

Teachers Learn about Wetlands, Watersheds and Water Quality

The Chicago Field Office provides teacher training in the form of four to eight-hour workshops that allow teachers to participate in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. In addition, the field office provides teachers with various educational materials to help them develop units of study that correlate to state learning standards. These workshops are hosted by local partners who can provide facilities such as classrooms and natural areas. Partners include county forest preserves, village park districts, local school districts, and nature centers throughout the greater Chicago area. In one year, the Chicago Office's Environmental Education Specialist conducted three workshops for 57 educators. Workshop attendees included pre-school, elementary, middle and high school teachers. These educators could conceivably teach thousands of students throughout their careers in this metro area.

Bald Eagle Days for Kids

The Rock Island, Ill., Field Office participated in Bald Eagle Days along the banks Mississippi. Festivities kicked off with Kid's Day for more than 1,000 area elementary school children. Using videos, a bald eagle mount and other educational tools, biologists fielded questions and comments about the bald eagle and helped explain why it is important to protect this and other endangered species. Following the educational kickoff, Rock Island Field Office staff participated at a booth throughout the weekend in an effort to answer questions and provide useful facts for the nearly 10,000 attendees of the festival.

Kids Fishing Day Nets Large Turnout at the Genoa NFH

The fourth annual Kids Fishing Day sponsored by the Friends group of the three La Crosse area Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries field offices—Genoa NFH, La Crosse FRO, and La Crosse FHC—took place on May 20. More than 150 youth, adult volunteers, and Fish and Wildlife Service staff were on hand to begin handing down responsible conservation ethics to eager young anglers. Assisted by Conservation Warden Shawna Stringham of the Wisconsin DNR, Falling Rock Walleye Club, Friends group members, and Fish and Wildlife Service biologists from the three river offices, participants visited five learning stations focusing on fishing ethics and conservation, river jig making, fish anatomy, fish cleaning, and fish behavior and habitats. Then the fun began! The kids were turned loose for a few hours on a pond stocked with 10- to 14-inch rainbow trout. More than a few stringers of five fish (the daily limit) were carried proudly around for all to see. Afterward, the crowd gathered for lunch and prizes.

All of the participants received a goody bag. Smiles were in abundance as the day came to a close, hopefully the result of a budding passion for fishing and natural resource conservation. Many thanks to all the helpers.



-USFWS

The 4th Annual Kids Fishing Day held at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery attracted over 150 youth, adult volunteers, and Fish and Wildlife Service staff.

Karner Blue Butterfly Festival

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Ecological Services programs, in conjunction with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Jackson County forest, opened a learning center at the Black River Falls, Wis., Karner Blue Butterfly Festival. Festival attendees enjoyed trolley tours to local attractions, including Bauer Brockway Barrens and Wazee Lake, both successful habitat restoration sites for the Karner blue. The learning center offered a slide show, video, numerous educational materials, and temporary tattoos of the butterfly and lupine, its preferred habitat. Approximately 2,000 children and adults experienced a positive grass roots community festival centered on the endangered Karner blue butterfly.

Kids Learn to Love Bats

Sixth graders at Ellettsville, Ind. Junior High studied bats as part of a unit on caves and cave life. Biologist Lori Pruitt from the Bloomington Field Office gave a presentation on bats to 215 students in eight classes. The students showed great enthusiasm and the presentation dispelled many myths about bats. For example, the students now know that the risk of a human contracting rabies from a bat is very low. Each student was given a unique “bat fact,” and left sporting an “ASK ME ABOUT BATS” sticker on their shirt and a bat ring on their finger. Their homework was to share their fact with everyone who asked them about bats. Prior to the presentation, students were given a pre-test to assess their knowledge of bats. Generally, students demonstrated a good understanding of bats. Outreach is identified in the Indiana bat recovery plan as an essential recovery action for this species. Nurturing a sense of stewardship for the Indiana bat and habitat is key to the conservation of this critically imperiled species. This is particularly true in southern Indiana, where half of all remaining Indiana bats spend their winters in the state’s limestone caves.

Central Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival a Booming Success

In an effort to restore and create habitat for grassland species such as the rare greater prairie chicken in six central Wisconsin counties, a group of agriculture and conservation organizations, and private landowners formed the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area (CWGCA) Partnership. To help raise aware-

ness and support for grassland conservation initiatives, the CWGCA Partnership held a Prairie Chicken Festival. Individuals from more than 20 agencies and organizations assisted with the planning and implementation of the festival, which was held at three different central Wisconsin locations, with a variety of activities at each venue. At the Buena Vista Wildlife Area, participants had the opportunity to see prairie chickens perform their early-morning courtship dances on their mating grounds, or leks. At the Mead Wildlife Area activities included bird banding demonstrations and guided tours of grasslands, wetlands, and managed grazing operations. Fish and Wildlife Service Private Lands Biologists Shawn Papon from Madison, Bill Peterson from Necedah, and Gary Van Vreede from Green Bay assisted with various activities throughout the day.



-USFWS photo by Gary Van Vreede
Visitors observe a bird banding demonstration as part of the Central Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival at the Mead Wildlife Area.

Ohio Division of Wildlife Reaches Out to Kids

The Ohio Division of Wildlife (DOW) is using Federal Assistance funds in two innovative partnerships to deliver comprehensive wildlife ecology and management education to its citizens. DOW and Wildlife Restoration dollars are granted to the Columbus Ohio Museum of Science and Industry (COSI) and the Ohio DNR Division of Parks to keep programs viable in tight budget time and to direct these organizations’ efforts towards wildlife management education.

The “COSI on Wheels” project is a traveling educational program that delivers a wildlife conservation message to more than 50,000 Ohio middle schoolers. COSI and DOW developed the program which uses inquiry-based, hands-on science learning focuses on the process of discovery. The program provides pre-visit activities and materials to schools and post-visit materials to reinforce key concepts.

The State Park Naturalist Program is a “win-win” for the Ohio DNR. Budget shortfalls led the Ohio Division of Parks to consider severe cutbacks in naturalist programs. The Division of Wildlife wanted to continue the excellent, youth-oriented program and its conservation message. With the granting of \$250,000 per year to the Parks Division, DOW was able to save much of the program while gaining an increased emphasis on wildlife biology and management. Park naturalists receive materials and training from DOW to enhance the wildlife content.

You Just Can't Beat Live Fish!

How do you impress first graders? Show them a picture of a big fish! How do you make 100 first graders turn into a screaming, chaotic mob? Show them LIVE fish! That's exactly how biologists Jennifer Johnson, Nick Frohnauer, and Geno Adams and technician Derrick Eisenbrei introduced Paxton-Keeley students in Columbia, Mo., to the wonderful world of Missouri River fish. Students and teachers got hands-on experience with smallmouth buffalo, shovelnose sturgeon, blue catfish, and other native riverine species, as well as invasive silver carp. It gave the Fish and Wildlife Service another opportunity to educate the public on issues dealing with the Missouri River as well as invasive species and their affects on the ecosystem. Inquisitive students had the opportunity to launch a barrage of questions ranging from "Can this fish bite me?" to "What is the biggest fish in the world?" Hopefully students and teachers alike came away with a greater appreciation for the creatures that swim in the waters of the Missouri River.



-USFWS
First graders enjoy handling live river fish, compliments of the Columbia Fishery Resources Office.

Camp Chickagami Retreat

A group of 40 fifth grade students from Lincoln Elementary, in Alpena, Mich., attended an overnight retreat at Camp Chickagami, spending two days camping and participating in a variety of outdoor educational activities. This event included canoeing, fishing, orienteering, and group building games. Alpena FRO biologist Susan Wells and Project Leader Jerry McClain participated, talking to the group on projects being conducted at the Alpena FRO and careers in natural resources. The kids also participated in a seining demonstration along the shoreline of Lake Esau, where the camp is located. Fish collected included spottail shiners, logperch, and rainbow darters. The students were then asked questions on the habitat types for each of the fish. After the demonstration, a packet of games and information regarding the Fish and Wildlife Service was provided to each student.



-USFWS photo by Anjanette Bowen
Fifth graders from Lincoln Elementary look on as Alpena Fishery Resources Office biologist Susan Wells collects fish with a seine at a Camp Chickagami outreach event.

Columbia FRO Attends Aquatic Day at Hallsville, Mo.

Biologists Jennifer Johnson and Geno Adams of the Columbia FRO attended "Aquatic Day" at Hallsville Elementary, where fourth grade students had recently finished a unit of study on aquatic organisms. The students were divided into groups of eight and rotated through stations where they could get up-close-and-personal with white crappie, gizzard shad, shortnose gar, freshwater drum, shovelnose sturgeon, channel catfish, river carpsucker, bigmouth buffalo, carp, and invasive silver carp.

At each station, students were quizzed on fish identification and given an overview of the fish's anatomy, diet, and habitat requirements along with fun facts. This gave biologists a chance to educate attendees on general life history characteristics of river fish and what role they play in the river ecosystem. The children were especially curious about feeding methods of fish, how they "breathe," and their unique anatomical structures. They enjoyed touching the fish and seeing first hand an example of living organisms from the Missouri River.



-USFWS photo by Jennifer Johnson
Columbia Fishery Resources Office biologist Geno Adams shows 4th grade students from Hallsville Elementary, Missouri, a shortnose gar.

Youth Learn About Waterfowl and Prairie Ecology

Personnel from the Region 3 Joint Venture Office and other Fish and Wildlife Service staff located in Fergus Falls, Minn., helped make the Minnesota Waterfowl Association's (MWA) annual youth Woodie Camp a success. For the past five years, camp has been held at the Fish and Wildlife Service's Prairie Wetland Learning Center, a residential environmental education facility in Fergus Falls. In addition to Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, the camp is staffed by people from MWA, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and numerous other individuals who are willing to share their expertise—for an entire week—with students.

In 2006, 46 young men and women between the ages of 13 and 15 took advantage of this opportunity. One of the camp's goals is to provide the students with information to help them better understand and appreciate the outdoors and learn skills that will help them have a safe and enjoyable experience outdoors. This is an ideal location for the students to learn about prairie and wetland ecology, waterfowl identification, and duck banding. The students also actively participate in shooting shotguns, duck and goose calling, boating safety, cleaning and cooking wild game, and planning a hunt or outdoor trip.



-USFWS
Youth that participate in "Woody Camp" learn to appreciate the outdoors and learn skills that will help them have a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

Partners Pull Together For Kid's Fishing Derby at Crab Orchard NWR

Carterville FRO, Illinois DNR, and numerous other partners assisted Crab Orchard NWR with the 33rd Annual Kid's Fishing Derby at Crab Orchard Lake. The family-oriented event saw greater success than ever, with 326 children registering and more than 50 volunteers assisting. More than 500 people were estimated to have attended. Carterville FRO stocked a 1,000 gallon water tank with fish captured from Crab Orchard Lake. The tank was also "stocked" with magnetic fish for the youngest anglers to catch. The "Toddler Tank," as it is called, is always a crowd favorite. Carterville FRO and Illinois DNR biologists also gave an electrofishing demonstration following the fishing derby.



-USFWS
Youngsters enjoy "fishing" for magnetic fish in the toddler tank at the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Lake Kid's Fishing Derby.

Prairie Science Class Students Band Ducks as Part of Their School Day

Last year marked the fourth year that Region 3 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) staff have partnered with the Fergus Falls, Minn., school district's Prairie Science Class to help students learn about waterfowl ecology. A hundred students are enrolled in the class, and the particular area of interest is migration. Fifty attend morning sessions, with the remainder attending afternoons. HAPET staff present two classroom programs. The first concerns basic waterfowl ecology with a focus on migration. The second session provides training on basic identification skills and how to handle live waterfowl for banding, taking specific measurements (leg, wing cord, upper bill and total weight), and proper banding technique. Day three finds student's teaming up to measure, band and release waterfowl.



-USFWS
Prairie Science Class students carefully take measurements and record information as they learn about waterfowl ecology.

Environmental Awareness Promoted at River Days

Staff from the La Crosse FRO participated in Upper Mississippi River Education Days at the Trempealeau NWR in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, and at the Upper Mississippi River Lock and Dam 9 near Lynxville, Wisconsin. These annual events are organized by local offices of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District. It is designed to inform 5th and 6th-grade students from invited schools about a diverse range of Upper Mississippi River topics including aspects of cultural and natural history, physical and biological science, natural resource management, and current events to promote awareness of this resource in a riverside classroom that is “big-as-all outdoors.”

Students who visited the La Crosse FRO aquatic invasive species “tail-gate pavilion” at the Trempealeau event came from as far away as Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The following week at the Lynxville event, students who saw a La Crosse FRO electrofishing boat in action along the river bank came from as far away as Dubuque, Iowa, and returned home with a better appreciation that mixing electricity and water is not a wise choice unless you intend to sample fish communities with this type of equipment and are trained to do so in a safe manner. As a result of this annual four-day outdoor educational event, more than 1,700 youth are now more aware of the Mighty Mississippi and its significance in their lives.



-USFWS

The 3rd Annual River Education Days, held at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), drew some 800 students. Presenters included staff from the La Crosse Fish Health Center, La Crosse Fishery Resources Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, Trempealeau First Response Emergency Medical Unit, and the Trempealeau NWR.

Annual Fishing Events Draw Crowds to Neosho NFH

More than 160 kids and 35 volunteers participated in Neosho NFH’s annual clinic and derby this year. The kids attended five different stations which included knot-tying, casting, fish identification, fish conservation, and boating safety. In addition, fire safety was taught by the local fire department. Everyone was served lunch and then fishing started. The fish were even cleaned, if desired. The very next week a derby for the disabled and elderly was conducted. This derby is getting bigger and bigger every year. To highlight the fishing events, manager Dave Hendrix gave several radio interviews and one television interview leading up to the derby activities.

Conservation Campers Learn About Fishery Management

Green Bay FRO staff recently assisted with the 2006 Sand Lake Conservation Camp in North-eastern Wisconsin. More than 30 kids and adults participated in the week-long event. Campers enjoyed various sessions including wildlife management, orienteering, forestry, canoeing, aquatic insect studies, invasive species, fisheries management, and bird habitat biology. Professionals in each discipline were invited to share personal experiences in their field of expertise. Green Bay FRO led the fish session which included a brief overview of basic fish biology, displays of gear used for assessments, a short discussion on typical biologist duties, and closing the week with an electroshocking and fyke netting demonstration. A highlight from the session was allowing the top camper to ‘fly’ the Remote Operated Vehicle out to the fyke net pot and inspect the catch.



-USFWS photo by DeAnna Cogswell
Steward Cogswell demonstrates fish sampling methods to a group of campers at the 2006 Sand Lake Conservation Camp.

Fifth Grade Prairie Science Class Finds an “Old Hen”

As occurs annually, numerous ducks captured during normal banding operations already carry bands. Most recaptures come from current year activities. In 2006, thirteen of these recaptured birds were banded by Region 3 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) staff in previous years, or banded elsewhere. One of these birds happened to be an “old” wood duck hen, and as luck would have it, she was captured on the morning of HAPET’s banding activity with the Fergus Falls schools’ Prairie Science Class. This hen wood duck was first captured at the Fergus Falls headquarters trap site on Aug. 11, 2004 and banded as a “local” bird (young of the year – not able to fly). Biologists applied band #1086-84594, as well as a \$100 reward band. Hen #1086-84594 was recaptured on the same pond on Sept. 15, 2006.

This particular bird provided a tremendous learning opportunity - as it allowed the students a time of wonder - and time to discuss these important wonders.

Prairie Science Class fifth grade wonders: “I wonder
why she came back here?”
if she nested in the same box she was hatched in?”
where she migrated to these last couple of winters?
how many ducklings she raised?”
did she have the same mate each year?”
why put the green reward band on too?”
what happens if someone shoots her?
how many bands are returned?

The list of wonders went on for more than 30 minutes during both half day sessions of the science

class. Each “wonder” was patiently answered as we watched ducks return to the calm surface of Adams Pond on this warm September day.



-USFWS

The Prairie Science Class wonder what this recaptured hen wood duck has been “up to” the last couple of years, since she was originally banded in 2004.

Genoa NFH Helps Sportsman’s Association “Make a Wish”

Genoa NFH helped United Special Sportsman Association (USSA) “Make a Wish” by assisting in their kids’ outdoor event in rural Black River Falls, Wis., providing an aquarium with fish and an outreach display with two minute presentations. The USSA provides unique outdoor opportunities to children diagnosed with cancer, Down’s syndrome, terminal illnesses, and other challenges.

The Black River site was an outstanding location for the fishing event because of the many lakes and ponds used to fill and drain cranberry bogs that are prevalent in the area. An early July morning thunderstorm moved through, but didn’t dampen the children’s enthusiasm for learning more about resource conservation, and enjoying a new fishing opportunity.

More than 120 kids and their parents attended the event at the home of Brigid O’Donoghue, the founder of USSA. As the kids spent the day learning about fish and mussels, fishing, shooting bows

and rifles, riding horses, and swimming, it was easy to see that they valued this chance to enjoy the many outdoor opportunities available. It was a pleasure and honor to be invited to be able to share in their joy, and participate in this noteworthy event.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge: Kid’s Fishing Day

The first Saturday in June finds children and their families learning about fish, fish ecology and how to fish on the Bass Ponds of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, a premier urban wildlife refuge in the shadow of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn. The refuge partners with the Red Lake Tribe, corporations and various organizations to hold this event. Children and their families go through a series of learning stations where they learn boating safety, what is the best bait, proper casting techniques and fish ecology. The highlight for the day is actually getting to fish. Each successful angler gets his or her photo taken with their catch. For many it is the first time they have gone fishing or it is the first fish they ever caught. For some of these “first-timers” this may be the defining moment that engages them with nature.

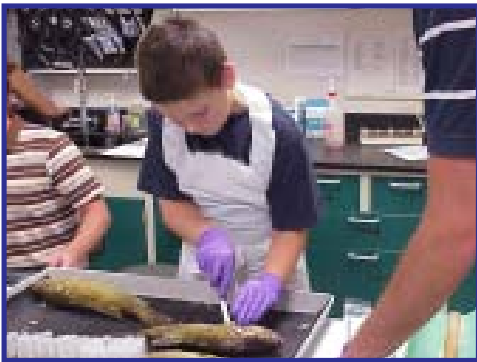


-USFWS

Kids Fishing Day at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a fun event for all ages!

Fourth Graders Learn about Fish Health

Fourth grader Canon O'Heron-LaBeff from the Bangor Elementary School visited the La Crosse FHC to complete a job shadow assignment for a class project. Employees Eric Leis and Ryan Katona explained to Canon why diagnostic/inspection work is done, selected procedures to determine cause of problems, and answered all his many questions. The smell of fish was stronger than Canon was aware of, especially when fish were cut open and the body fluids were exposed. He was very interested in the procedures, the complexity of the sampling protocols, and specialized education and training required for the position. He is the nephew of Nancy Christopherson, administrative technician for the La Crosse FRO.



-USFWS

A future fish health biologist carefully conducts his task during a job shadow assignment at the La Crosse Fish Health Center.

Students Get the Grand Tour

The bright yellow school bus pulled up to the Iron River NFH on March 21. Twenty students from the Ashland High School, accompanied by their teacher, arrived to take a tour of the hatchery. They were quite impressed by the number of fish on station (1.2 million yearlings, approximately 1.6 million fry, and several thousand brood stock) and wondered what we do with all the fish. Biologist Angela Baran guided the class and explained where the hatchery gets its water supply (Schacte Creek), what happens to the fish (spawning brood stock in the fall and stocking yearlings in the spring), and why the hatchery only raises lake trout and coaster brook trout (restoring naturally reproducing native populations in the Great Lakes). The students were able to get a close look at the "big" distribution trucks and peek inside the smaller tanks used for hauling fry. Many questions were asked about how to get a job with the Fish and Wildlife Service and what types of classes to take in college, so hopefully we will have some new recruits someday!



-USFWS

Genoa National Fish Hatchery provided an aquarium display and assistance at a United Special Sportsman Association childrens fishing event.

Youth Volunteer Banding Program Makes an Impression

The Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), based in Fergus Falls, Minn., has offered area youth ages 7 to 18 the chance to participate in annual waterfowl banding operations. Once volunteer forms are completed and basic operations reviewed, young banders are placed with a HAPET banding team, which travels to trap sites where birds are banded and released. Often as a result of this opportunity, these youth develop a keen interest in waterfowl or other wildlife. Two examples are Rebecca Scott and Monica Noah. At age 12, Rebecca created a waterfowl banding display which won several local and state awards and has been used at numerous Fish and Wildlife Service outreach events. In addition to helping with the HAPET banding program, Monica Noah, 18, volunteered as a banding assistant as part of the Fergus Falls school district's Prairie Science Class. Currently, she is putting pen to paper, writing waterfowl/wildlife related articles she hopes to have published. Both young women are also active volunteers at the Prairie Wetland Learning Center in Fergus Falls.



-USFWS

Monica Noah is a volunteer at the Prairie Wetland Learning Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Urban Conservation Treaty is a Tool for Re-Connecting Children with Nature

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the City of Chicago are working together to connect children with the natural world through the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds, a national Fish and Wildlife Service program. Millions of people are concentrated in America's urban centers; relatively few are aware of the richness of bird life many of these urban centers offer, and clearly there is great opportunity to raise awareness and concern for bird populations. An Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds is a partnership agreement between a U.S. city and the Service for the purpose of conserving migratory birds through education and habitat improvement strategies. All of the program components have the potential for actively engaging both children and adults in bird conservation activities and could be structured so that children are a primary focus. The Chicago treaty supported the expansion of the *For the Birds* project through Chicago Audubon and the City of Chicago. This project was initiated as a habitat stewardship program in Chicago parks, but the Chicago program created a school-based extension of the *For the Birds* project targeted at second through sixth graders. The program involves classroom exercises that teach children about Chicago birds and then engages the students in the construction of birdhouses that they install in Chicago Parks. It also supported the creation of a student's guide to Chicago's birds. The program reached over 600 students in its first year. The City of Chicago also sponsored a Nature Week festival that focused on

migratory birds. Various activities were developed in conjunction with Nature Week that promoted public awareness of birding organizations, bird conservation techniques, and enjoyment of resident and migratory birds.

Kindergarten Field Trip to Jordan River

On May 24, 125 kindergarten students (plus chaperones) from the South Maple Elementary School toured Jordan River NFH. Each group of 25 learned about a different station for twenty minutes before moving on to the next station. In the visitor center, they learned about sea lampreys and other invasive species, our brood stations, and our offshore stocking vessel. In the tank room they viewed the youngest fish on station, saw what we feed them, and learned about the daily work involved with raising them. At the Six-Tile water supply, they saw where our water, and our black fly population comes from, and they learned about our seasonal water temperature variability and its effect on fish growth. At the outside raceways, they saw fish at release size (six to seven inches total length), learned about our feed truck, raceway cleaning practices, and how we use our fish pump to load fish distribution trucks. Finally, they got a chance to have a snack of goldfish crackers, pretzels, and orange Hi-C (courtesy of the Mancelona McDonald's restaurant) while they colored pictures of lake trout. This is the second year that the kindergarten teachers have chosen the Jordan River NFH for their final spring field trip. They plan on a third annual trip in 2007.



-USFWS photo by Andy Pavelek

Tim Smigielski explains about raising young lake trout to kindergarten students from Gaylord, Michigan.

Hubbard Lake Kids Fishing Day a Success

Biologist Aaron Woldt staffed an information booth at the Hubbard Lake Kid's Fishing Day festival in northern Michigan, an annual event sponsored by the Hubbard Lake Sportsmen and Improvement Association and designed to educate children ages 5 to 13 about local fish populations and recreational fishing. Woldt distributed pamphlets and spoke to ten groups of approximately ten children each, their parents, and other interested public, regarding invasive sea lamprey and lamprey control. He described the timeline and path of the sea lamprey invasion in the Great Lakes, negative impacts of sea lamprey predation on native fish species such as lake trout and lake whitefish, the biology and unique anatomy of sea lamprey. He also discussed control techniques used by the Fish and Wildlife Service, including chemical treatment of juveniles, trapping of adults, in-stream barriers and the sterile male release program. Each lecture also included a hands-on demonstration of sea lamprey anatomy using live lampreys.

Bible School Students Connect with River Ecosystem

Vacation Bible School students from First Congregational Church in Winona, Minn., took part in outdoor activities to improve their awareness of the abundant natural wonders in their backyard. Fish and Wildlife Service staff had been contacted by the church requesting assistance with teaching the students “stewardship” of the river ecosystem and the fish and wildlife that call it home. Ann Runstrom from the La Crosse FRO and Cindy Samples and Brian Pember of the Upper Mississippi River NW&FR-Winona District worked together and taught the kids about local plants (including “hands-on” experience with poison ivy), invertebrates, fish, and wildlife and their role in the ecosystem. In the evening, kids were able to “touch and feel” lake sturgeon and learn about their behavior and adaptations to live in the river. The following day, kids went out to the Upper Mississippi River NW&FR and helped collect, examine, and identify invertebrates and fish.



-USFWS
Bible school students connect with river ecology, complements of Fish and Wildlife Service offices.

Hatchery assists Corps of Engineers with Kids Fishing Day

The Genoa NFH assisted its neighbors on the Mississippi River, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (CORPS), by staffing a display during the educational portion of the Kids Fishing Day held on August 5 at the CORP’s Blackhawk Park. The annual event typically draws participants from nearby Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The hatchery set up an aquarium and display featuring upper Mississippi River aquatic species. More than 100 kids got to see and touch live sturgeon, mussels, and flathead catfish. Then, five separate groups each saw a 15-minute presentation on fish identification, habitat requirements, and behavior. They were then turned loose to try their luck fishing in the Mississippi River. This cooperative effort is a unique opportunity to partner with another Federal agency to promote a conservation message to the next generation of natural resource stewards.



-USFWS
Biologist Nick Starzl of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery shows children one of the many Mississippi River fish on display during the Kids Fishing Event held at the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Blackhawk Park.

Alpena FRO Participates in Scoutfest 2006

On September 23 biologist Scott Koproski participated in the 2006 Scoutfest, hosted by the Thunder Bay Recreational Center in Alpena, Michigan. Scoutfest is an event that brings together Boy Scouts and Girl Scout troops from northeast Michigan for a weekend to participate in archery, monkey bridge, rock climbing, and campfire cooking, just to name a few. More than 130 scouts participated.

Over 75 scouts stopped by the Alpena FRO booth. Many of the kids had some sort of fishing story they wanted to share such as “I caught a fish that was as big as I am” or “I don’t like fish because they are slimy.” Games, fish mounts, and brochures were available. Information was provided on aquatic invasive species, native species, and fielded a variety of questions dealing with the Great Lakes ecosystem. By providing the scouts a brief exposure to the work of the science professions, it may entice a few to choose a similar career path as adults.

4H Conservation Tour Held at Jordan River NFH

Michigan State University Extension 4H and the Antrim County Soil Conservation District co-sponsored the “2006 Conservation Tour” at the Jordan River NFH. More than 300 fifth and sixth grade students from Antrim County attended the day-long event. The students rotated among stations on the hatchery grounds. There were many volunteers and partners involved in addition to hatchery staff. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Antrim Soil Conservation District, Michigan DNR, Michigan Visitor Center, See North, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, and Michigan State University Extension participated. Volunteer workers from Americorps and the hatchery rounded out the crew.

The students learned about the importance of our watersheds and the need for high quality water for trout culture. Students especially enjoyed the station headed by Maureen Jacobs and Julie Fraley from the Michigan DNR hatcheries. Students collected aquatic insects in the Jordan River, identified them, and learned the significance of their distribution and abundance to the ecosystem. Wayne Talo and John Johnston demonstrated pond cleaning, talked about fish culture in general, and provided the teachers with handouts detailing some hatchery math examples to teach the kids once they got back to school. Once back to the hatchery building, Stan Moore from MSU Extension and hatchery manager Rick Westerhof tag-teamed the key messages of sea lamprey control and lake trout rehabilitation. Tim Smigielski followed up with an explanation of fish distribution and a tour of the tank room. Wow, long and busy, but

so many compliments from parents, kids, and spectators. Thanks to Dee Miller, Antrim County 4H Education Director, who coordinated the event for the 4H.



-USFWS photo by Wayne Talo

John Johnston demonstrates the finer points of raceway cleaning to a group of 4H students.

Whittlesey Creek NWR: Wisconsin River of Words

As a participant in the State of Wisconsin’s River of Words program, Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge is reaching out to students who may not be predisposed to have an interest in nature. The program uses art and poetry as the delivery medium to reach out to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade to encourage them to draw and write about nature. The focus at Whittlesey Creek is watersheds. The students begin by drawing maps and watersheds, eventually moving toward art with a focus on water. Students more inclined to use words to express themselves learn the basics of poetry and eventually write a poem with water as a theme. These are often students that would never make a connection to the natural world. The River of Words program at Whittlesey Creek has partnered with a local elementary school for the last two years.

Genoa NFH Celebrates 150th Vernon County Fair

The Genoa NFH was honored to be a part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the Vernon County Fair in southwestern Wisconsin. This makes the fifth consecutive fair season that Genoa NFH personnel have staffed an outreach booth and aquarium display at the fair, attended by more than 13,000 people. Many of the fairgoers made a point to stop and see the miniature aquatic community shown in the hatchery aquarium. Both live mussels and fish were displayed, with the biggest hits being the lake sturgeon, or “dinosaur fish” as fairgoers often called them. Sunglasses, coloring books, and fish tattoos were also in high demand with the kids.



-USFWS

Jenny Walker talks with visitors about the fish raised at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery during the local county fair.

