



NEWS RELEASE

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DETROIT RIVER REFUGE TAKES ON HAWK WATCH

Grosse Ile, MI – During the autumn months, the skies over southeastern Michigan are alive with tens of thousands of hawks, eagles, falcons, and other birds of prey. In fact, the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie are known as one of the best areas in North America to view raptor migration.

In 1983, the Lake Erie Metropark Hawk Watch, and later Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research, began recording migration data when enthusiastic birders recognized the incredible phenomena. During the three month, fall migration season, an average of 220,000 birds, representing 16 species, are recorded. Several North American birding records have been documented, including the single largest Broad-winged Hawk flight ever recorded in the United States: 555,176 birds. In 2008, Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research will pass the responsibility of the hawk watch program to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Refuge's friend's group called the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance who will work collaboratively to integrate it into the current environmental monitoring efforts of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Paul Cypher, President of Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research, says "We are very excited knowing that the Refuge is continuing the count."

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has placed a high priority on scientific research by conducting colonial waterbird surveys, performing fishery assessments, undertaking research on Common Tern, cooperating with Michigan Department of Natural Resources on waterfowl surveys, monitoring bald eagle populations, funding evaluations of long-term trend data collected under the Christmas Bird Count program and monitoring of dragonflies, and translating scientific data about the health of the Detroit River and western Lake Erie in biennial State of the Strait Conferences and publications. Dr. John Hartig, Refuge manager, says "Integrating the Detroit River Hawk Watch program into the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System will institutionalize it in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure its longevity and better promote it within the broader scientific and conservation community. We are honored to continue this great work of dedicated birders and conservationists of the former Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research. "

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has plans to expand the hawk migration studies through the involvement of a Refuge biologist and publish hawk watch data and findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals. They will keep the hawk watch protocols the same as in past years to ensure comparability of

Contacts:

Greg Norwood, Biologist
Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
9311 Groh Rd.
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
(734) 692-7611
greg_norwood@fws.gov

Lisa Appel, Executive Director
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance
9311 Groh Rd.
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
(734) 692-7671
iwr_alliance@yahoo.com

Paul Cypher, President
Southeastern Michigan
Raptor Research
(734) 379-5020
paulcypher@comcast.net



data. The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance will support the hawk watch through fundraising efforts and participate in the annual Hawk Fest held at Lake Erie Metropark. Hawk Fest celebrates the annual fall migration of birds of prey - hawks, eagles, falcons, owls and vultures. This year's event will be held September 20 to 21, 2008 from 10 am to 5 pm. At the festival, visitors will see live birds, demonstrations, and exhibits.

To promote the transition between Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, the new title for the hawk monitoring program is *Detroit River Hawk Watch*. More information about the program and daily count journals can be accessed at the updated website, www.smrr.net.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that builds the capacity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deliver the mission of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Major in sponsors in 2008 include General Motors Corporation, BASF, ITC Holdings Corp., and DTE Energy Foundation.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge covers 48 miles of shoreline along the Detroit River and western Lake Erie (<http://www.fws.gov/Midwest/DetroitRiver/>). The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 65 kinds of fish, and 300 species of migratory birds. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is the first international wildlife refuge in North America. Unique habitats being managed within the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and riverfront lands.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

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Contacts:

Greg Norwood, Biologist
Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
9311 Groh Rd.
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
(734) 692-7611
greg_norwood@fws.gov

Lisa Appel, Executive Director
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9311 Groh Rd.
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
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