



For Immediate Release: September 10, 2007

Contacts: Caleb Putnam, Michigan Important Bird Areas Coordinator (616-774-3000), Gerry Wykes, Curator of the Marshlands Museum at Lake Erie Metropark (734-379-5020, ext. 5736) or Paul Cypher, President of Southeast Michigan Raptor Research (734-379-5020, ext. 5736)

## **Public Invited to September 15<sup>th</sup> Ceremony Recognizing the Lower Detroit River and Lake Erie Metropark as Important Bird Areas (IBAs)**

BROWNSTOWN MI, The Michigan Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, Detroit Audubon Society, and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge will hold a formal ceremony to recognize the lower Detroit River and Lake Erie Metropark as IBAs that provide essential habitat for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. The IBA Program is a global effort to conserve habitats for birds and other biodiversity. The ceremony will take place Saturday September 15 at 4:00 PM as part of the Hawkfest at Lake Erie Metropark.

The lower Detroit River, one of the region's key waterbird stopover sites, is home to large numbers of migrating and wintering Canvasback ducks (representing up to 10% of the estimated global population some years) and Tundra Swans (up to 1,900 individuals), and has supported approximately 275 Common Tern nests in recent years. Lake Erie Metropark is a key bottleneck point for migrating raptors (such as hawks, eagles, falcons, and vultures), annually averaging over 150,000 Broad-winged Hawks and from 7,000 to 9,000 Sharp-shinned Hawks, as they pass southward around Lake Erie. Both sites are considered crucial to the long-term survival of these and other bird species.

The ceremony will be held at Hawkfest that is held during the peak of the autumn raptor migration, and visitors can expect to see many migrating hawks and to observe and photograph up close many live raptors. Speaking at the ceremony will be U.S. Congressman John Dingell, Michigan State Representative Kathleen Law, Lake Erie Metropark staff, and John Hartig,

Refuge Manager of the International Wildlife Refuge. There will also be a formal ribbon-cutting, and a sign unveiling. No RSVP is required for these activities.

“This IBA recognition is an excellent example of the partnerships we are establishing to build, monitor, and manage North America’s only International Wildlife Refuge,” notes Congressman John Dingell. “This IBA Program will help us set science-based priorities for habitat conservation and will help provide unique opportunities for participation by volunteers and citizen scientists.”

“This IBA recognition for the lower Detroit River and Lake Erie Metropark provides further evidence of the uniqueness of our Downriver wildlife and habitats,” notes Michigan State Representative Kathleen Law. “We are so fortunate to have these natural resources right in our backyard that provide the foundation for our growing ecotourism economy.”

The IBA Program is a global initiative of BirdLife International. It is administered in the United States by Audubon and in Michigan by a consortium of conservation organizations: Audubon, Michigan Audubon, Detroit Audubon, and the Kalamazoo Nature Center. The program seeks to identify and conserve the world’s most crucial sites for bird conservation.

For more information about the IBA Program:

Caleb G. Putnam  
Michigan Important Bird Areas Coordinator  
cputnam@audubon.org  
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/>  
[www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

For more information about HawkFest:

Paul Cypher  
President, Southeast Michigan Raptor Research  
paulcypher@comcast.net  
<http://www.smrr.net/events.shtml>

For more information about the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver/>

###