



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

November 2008

Federal Duck Stamp Winner

Inside This Issue:

Winner Joshua Spies Up Close

Kids and Nature Day

Retirees Reunion

Thorson Legacy

Flood 2008

Long Tails Help Winner Fulfill Long Time Goal

Cover courtesy of Joshua Spies: The winning artwork for the 2009-2010 Federal Duck Stamp.

what's inside

Editor's Note:

Connecting with nature does not look the same for everyone. Connecting with nature means different things to different people. For some, it's hunting and fishing. For others, it's walking in the woods or on the beach. What does your nature encounter look like? We want to know. To that end, we have added a regular section called Let's Go Outside!

We invite you to submit personal nature encounters as experienced by you and your children, as well as innovative ideas on how to connect with nature. We will run your accounts in this feature segment.

Please submit your youngsters' stories and photos to our regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's Corner features the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov with your Let's Go Outside and Kids Corner articles, photos, journal entries and poems.

On the Cover: The winning artwork for the 2009-2010 Federal Duck Stamp. The big win went to 35 year-old South Dakota artist, Joshua Spies for his depiction of this long-tailed duck and decoy.

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By Valerie Rose Redmond



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What Went On and When

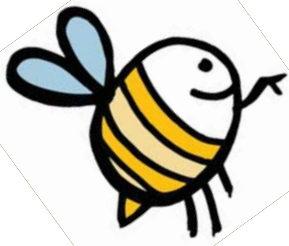
By Ashley Spratt



Duck Stamp Photo Essay/ 10

A Bird's Eye View of the Contest

By Valerie Rose Redmond



*Above:
ABA Conference attendees gather
at the Holiday Inn Select in Bloomington for a
group photo. Photo by V. Redmond.*

Region Wide Administrative Workshop

The Midwest Region convened a region wide administrative workshop for all programs. The week-long gathering was held in the Twin Cities October 20-24. It emphasized education and training along with working sessions to help Region 3 move forward with excellence and efficiency in administrative services at the field and regional levels.



National Wildlife Refuge Week

On Oct. 18 a refuge “open house” was held at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in conjunction with NWR Week. Refuge staff, volunteers, and partners conducted programs and activities for the public. Although the crowd was down from previous years, those that attended stayed for quite a while, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the event. It was especially good to see so many kids at the refuge.

*-- John Mabery, Manager
Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge*



Left: Curt McMurl, wildlife refuge specialist at Two Rivers, is assisting kids with building bird nest boxes on the deck of the refuge visitor information center.

Mongolia or Bust!

Life in Lieu of Retirement

Adventure Seeker Dave Heffernan

forewent a life of leisure for a labor intensive two and a half year trek to Mongolia, after retiring in 2003 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). In a bold and rare move, he and his wife Catherine joined the Peace Corps (Corps), a government agency that gives volunteers the opportunity to travel overseas to make a real difference in people's lives by living and working in developing countries.

Heffernan and his wife became familiar with the agency through their son Mike who served with the Corps in Ecuador in the late 1980s.

After clearing an extensive health and background check, the two were informed that their new home would be Mongolia, a country roughly the size of the state of Alaska. They spent their first ten weeks in northern Mongolia living with a family that spoke not a word of English. There they underwent intensive culture, language and technical training. Upon completion of training, they moved to the capitol city Ulaanbaatar, and began their two-year work assignments.

"Retirees were a small percentage of the population," Heffernan recalls with a smile. As a married couple from the States, he notes, he and his wife were a

rare breed.

While his wife taught English at a college, Heffernan's assignment was similar to his work with the Service. Heffernan spent 35 years with the Service, the first twenty of those years on Refuges, and the rest in D.C., Atlanta and Denver offices. He was assigned to the Ministry of Nature and Environment in the capitol city, where he helped with master plans for their Special Protected Areas and National Parks, as well as other duties as assigned. His assignment afforded him the rare opportunity to travel throughout Mongolia (a country with less than 700 miles of paved roads), helping train park rangers and managers during his two year stint.

The Corps has been actively seeking experienced natural resource professionals in recent years.

"The people were very poor but happy," Heffernan says of the citizens of Mongolia which is still a predominately nomadic culture of livestock herders. "They would gladly give you anything that they had. If there was a meeting like this [retiree meeting], each person would stand up and sing a song or recite a poem about their mother, their country or their horse," Heffernan explains about the people.

Heffernan served as the Refuge Manager at Rice Lake in Minnesota for ten years. However, "Minnesota can't hold a candle to the temperatures there," he says of Mongolia, which is bordered to the north by Russia and the south, west and east by the The People's Republic of China. Continued on page 5.

Dave Heffernan and wife Catherine pause for a quick photo.



2008 Oktoberfest Retirees Reunion in Bloomington, Minn.

Harvey K. Nelson Awarded Silver Eagle Award by Midwest Region

Minnesota native Harvey K. Nelson received the prestigious Silver Eagle Award by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region. Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson presented the award to Nelson at the Service's annual Retirees Reunion held in Bloomington, Minn., this October.

you all for your dedication, your commitment, and your continued support of the Fish and Wildlife Service mission," Thorson said.

An active member of the conservation community, Nelson worked for the Service for 42 years before retiring in 1992 to pursue various leadership roles in non-governmental conservation organizations. A waterfowl biologist by training, Nelson held numerous positions during his career with the Service, ranging from field biologist to Regional Director for the Midwest Region. He also served as the Executive Director of the North American Waterfowl and Wetlands Office in Arlington, Va.

The native of Bloomington, Minn., has received numerous awards for his efforts in the upper Midwest conservation community. Nelson was named Man of the Year for 2000 by Minnesota Outdoor News, and awarded an Honorary Doctorate from North Dakota State University.

--Ashley Spratt, *External Affairs*

time they left Mongolia, high speed internet service was available in the capitol city.

Most Corps volunteers know they can only influence the small sphere of people they work with daily. The goal is to "build capacity" in the host country nationals, who will then be more capable of helping their own country to continue to develop. One project Heffernan is pleased with was helping the Mongolian environmental professionals connect with the Service by initiating contact with the Service's International Affairs Office. He began this process in 2003 and is pleased to learn that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in Wildlife and Natural Resource

Conservation, between the Mongolian government and the Service, was signed in September, 2008. "It is not unusual for volunteers to see that the seeds they helped plant, take root many years after they have left the country," said Heffernan, The Heffernans Mongolian adventure gave Heffernan and his wife a new perspective on life. "We are just a small part of it," he says. It's difficult to listen to the financial woes of people here in the States when a light is shed on the plight of others in the world, he explains. "We are very lucky." For more information about the Peace Corp visit: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

--Valerie R. Redmond,
*External Affairs and
Dave Heffernan,
Retired FWS employee*

Mongolia Continued

Heffernan, who now resides in Colorado, says that he and his wife became grandparents three times over when they were abroad. It was difficult to be away during these special times, but world telecommunications made all the difference, he explains. Mongolia pretty much skipped land telephone lines and went right to mobile phone towers. By the

Recognizing people and organizations that have made an impressive contribution to wildlife conservation and management, the Silver Eagle Award is the highest honor given by the Service's Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region.

"So many of the faces I see in the crowd today are inspirational figures in the Fish and Wildlife community, just like Harvey Nelson, and I want to thank

Regional Director Robyn Thorson honors Nelson with the award.



2008 Oktoberfest Retirees Reunion in Bloomington, Minn.

Director Honors Harold W. Benson at Retiree Reunion

Service Director Dale Hall honored Harold W. Benson, legendary Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP) pioneer, in a presentation to his family at the 2008 Retirees Reunion in Bloomington, Minn., this October.

most significant and successful migratory bird habitat protection programs, SWAP.

To commemorate Harold's work, the Service renamed the Cottonwood Waterfowl Production Area in Stutsman County, North Dakota, the Harold W. Benson Memorial Waterfowl Production Area. The WPA is located just a few miles from where Harold opened up the very first Wetlands

"The early SWAP "pioneers" were hard working dedicated employees who didn't ask for much and didn't get much. There were no car radios to check on weather when in the field, no cell phones to use when you got stuck in 3' snow drifts at 20 below, no computers to write appraisal reports, no e-mail or lap tops to maintain communications with landowners, clients, staff, etc. Most importantly,

there were but a few who saw every obstacle as an opportunity, and Harold was one of those rare people. He had more energy and determination than any other SWAP person (retiree or other) that I knew in my 32 year career with SWAP. He was *the* leader who inspired the rest of us to go out "and save the dirt."

-Testimony from Paul Hartmann, 32-year veteran of SWAP, read by Service Director Dale Hall at 2008 Retirees Reunion in Bloomington, Minn.

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs



Dale Hall honors the family of Harold Benson.

Benson was a leader in the Service's land acquisition and management programs, and had an instrumental role in the passage of the Wetlands Loan Act in 1961. This landmark legislation led to the creation of one of the Service's

Acquisition Office in Jamestown, North Dakota.

"Your father was an admired and respected member of our Service family, and with his passing his peers and co-workers also felt the loss of a great conservationist and a close friend," said Hall.

Kids in Nature Day at Minnesota Valley NWR

Students from three Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Partner Schools stepped out of the classroom for a day to be a part of Minnesota's conservation history. Students from American Indian Magnet, Windom Dual Spanish Immersion and East Union elementary schools visited the Bloomington Art Center to see the original artwork from the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest. The students marveled over the detail and designs of the more than 250 contest entries on display, and learned photography tips from well-known Midwest wildlife photographer and author, Dudley Edmondson.

"Kids in Nature Day was a great opportunity to connect young people with conservation history and wildlife art. Being part of the Federal Duck Stamp celebration provides these students with a greater understanding of our wildlife conservation heritage and a deeper appreciation of wildlife art. It was not only an educational event, they had a lot of fun too," said Beth Ullenberg, supervisory visitor services manager for Minnesota Valley NWR.

In the afternoon, the students were bussed over to Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge where former Jr. Duck Stamp national winner Kerissa Nelson and Dudley Edmondson taught the kids how to enjoy outdoor experiences using art and photography. Refuge biologists and staff also introduced the children to bird banding and wildlife biology, while Jay Johnson from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources emphasized the importance of Minnesota's waterfowl and hunting heritage.

"The Federal Duck Stamp and Jr. Duck Stamp contests provide opportunities for people - especially children - to connect with nature using

art. It's important for these younger generations to be a part of the duck stamp program's success, because they are the future of conservation," said Jim Leach, Midwest region refuge supervisor.

--Ashley Spratt, *External Affairs*



Above: Kids and FWS staff enjoy Kids and Nature day at

ROBYN SAYS GOODBYE

On Oct. 23 at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington, Minn., Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson bid farewell to her friends and colleagues in Region 3, many of whom were like family to her. Thorson leaves the Midwest to head up Region 2 in the Pacific Northwest. She spoke with choked up emotion to the crowd as she thanked her administrative assistant, Pat Jelinek, Deputy Director Charlie Wooley, and the region as a whole.

Guests who came to the event from every corner of the region were treated to a bountiful spread of sandwiches, decadent desserts and even live music courtesy of regional employees.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Regional Director Robyn Thorson says goodbye to friends and colleagues at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

ROBYN SAYS GOODBYE

Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson joined the R3 family in April of 2003. Her tenure over the eight state region was a productive and impressive one.

Upon her arrival, Thorson collaborated with the Centennial Commission established under the Refuge Centennial Act of 2000 to commemorate the Refuge System Centennial and expand public awareness, understanding and support for the refuge system. She promoted sustainable fisheries management, sound science and brought IT systems into full compliance with the Federal Department and Service Security guidelines.

Afterwards, Thorson built up collaborations and partnerships to further the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). She achieved management excellence by aligning human capital policies, recruitment, training, leadership development, performance management and diversity initiatives to effectively support the mission of the Services.

Thorson exercised dynamic executive leadership to employ agency resources to help build regional

consensus among states, agencies, tribes and other stakeholders to supplement the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force Executive order. Thorson's leadership resulted in restoration goals that were exceeded by a significant measure, including 8,600 acres treated through the region's partner's programs.

excellence where productivity is enhanced by providing employees with a safe, supportive and fair work environment.

Thorson expanded access to Region 3 contracting opportunities by using "FedBizOps" website to post contracts, solicitations, and awards.



Regional Director Robyn Thorson feels the love from thunderous applause after her farewell speech.

She oversaw the establishment of the 35,000-acre Glacial Ridge NWR in collaboration with the State of Minnesota, Polk County, and the Nature Conservancy. Glacial Ridge is the first NWR established by FWS since 2001.

Thorson oversaw the seamless transfer of Missouri River "lead" from R3 to R6.

She built a high level of support for implementation of National Fish Habitat Action Plan from Service programs and stakeholders.

Thorson promoted cooperative conservation as a representative for the Great Lakes Region Collaboration and Great Lakes Council; WCEP; MNRG; Federal Executive Board, State of Lakes Ecosystem Conference and the Great Lakes Fish Commission, among others. She also partnered with the Chicago Wilderness "Leave No Child Inside".

Thorson also presided over the historic 2008 Duck Stamp Contest, a highly successful event that has only been held outside of Washington D.C. four times and has never before been in Minnesota.

Thorson demonstrated leadership acumen and abilities resulting in exceptional accomplishments by expanding partnership/collaboration programs. She established the innovative "Working Lands Initiative" partnership with the State of Minnesota and other state and federal agencies to identify, map and protect the most productive wetland areas. She convened the first-ever, inter-regional (Regions 3, 4 and 5) Indiana Bat meeting that included some of the nation's top bat experts.

Thorson's leadership and personal involvement in managing human capital has made Region 3 a workplace of

2008

Federal Duck Stamp Contest

A Photo Essay: A Window into History in the Making



2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Photo Essay: A Window into History in the Making

History in the Making

What does it mean to make history? Progressive history means to have the audacity to attempt something that is unprecedented. It is to have the bold ambition to target what most say is at best an impossibility and at worst, delusional. It is to endeavor to manifest something that's never been done before. It is to push forward with ambition, even in the face of insurmountable odds. While at the same time, managing to push

aside frequent observations and sometimes cutting criticisms that it cannot be done. It is to employ the faculty of imagination in a way that branches out in every direction like the alluring aroma from the kitchen of a passionate cook on Thanksgiving Day, stirring and stimulating the hungry minds and hearts of others. It is to quiet the voices of fear and accusations of powerlessness. It is to set the bar high and surpass one's predecessors in a way that

those watching cannot help but wonder if there was some divine force at work. It is to inspire those who come after to set the bar even higher for those who come after them. It is to do something that not only causes people to pause, but to gasp with jaws dropped, suspend in the moment, breath taken away...and take note.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



1.



2.



3.



4.

2, and 5.
The Color Guard
opens the ceremony with tradition and honor.



5.

1. Last year's winner Joe Hautman (L) connects with a young admirer (R) at his poster signing. 3. Bloomington TV producer Rolanda Taylor-Enroth (L) conducts an interview with RD Thorson (R). 4. The Angelica Cantanti Choir out of Bloomington, Minn. entertained guests before the opening. 6. Director Dale Hall welcomes the guests to the historic events.



6.

Photo essay photos by Valerie Rose Redmond.

2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Photo Essay: A Window into History in the Making

The First Time

The Midwest has a long tradition of wildlife conservation, waterfowl hunting and arts appreciation. These traditions came together Oct. 17 and 18 as Minnesota hosted—for the first time—the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest.

This marked only the fourth time the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest has been held outside of Washington, D.C., and the first time the contest has been held in the Midwest.

The first Federal Duck Stamp was designed in 1934 by Midwest native, editorial cartoonist and Director of the Bureau of Biological Survey J.N. “Ding” Darling. In subsequent years, other noted wildlife artists were asked to submit designs. The first Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest in 1949 was open to any U.S. artist who wished to enter. Until 2005, the contest was held in Washington, D.C. Since then, it has been held in Memphis twice and in Sanibel, Fla. The location for the 2009

Federal Duck Stamp Contest will be announced early in 2009.

--Rachel F. Levin

*Communications Coordinator
Division of Bird Habitat
Conservation*



7.



8.



9.



10.

7., 8., 10., 11. and 12.

Connecting Children

to nature was a repeating theme at the stellar affair.



11.

9. R3 External Affairs team members Ryan Aylesworth (L) and Larry Dean (R) were on hand early to help the duck stamp process run smoothly. 13. Refuge Chief Nita Fuller opened the event with the director of the Bloomington Center of the Arts, Jim Urie acting as the master of ceremonies. Bloomington Mayor Gene Winstead also spoke at the unveiling event.



12.



13.

2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Photo Essay: A Window into History in the Making



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16.



17.



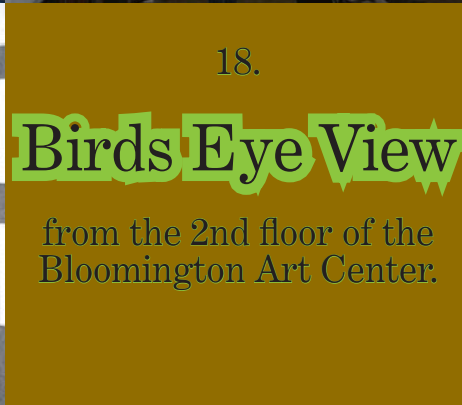
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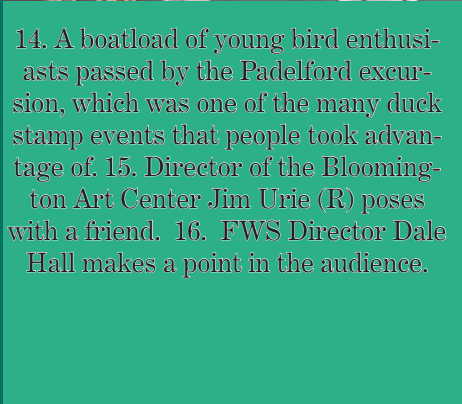
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Birds Eye View

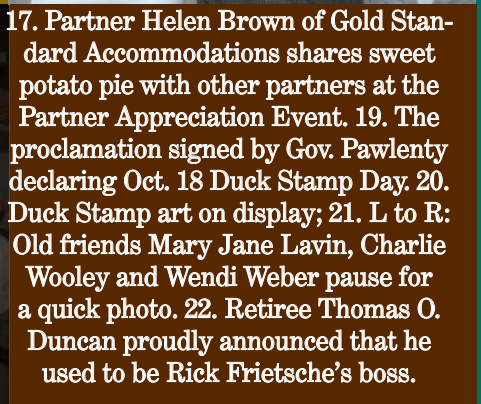
from the 2nd floor of the
Bloomington Art Center.



21.



22.



17. Partner Helen Brown of Gold Standard Accommodations shares sweet potato pie with other partners at the Partner Appreciation Event. 19. The proclamation signed by Gov. Pawlenty declaring Oct. 18 Duck Stamp Day. 20. Duck Stamp art on display; 21. L to R: Old friends Mary Jane Lavin, Charlie Wooley and Wendi Weber pause for a quick photo. 22. Retiree Thomas O. Duncan proudly announced that he used to be Rick Frietsche's boss.

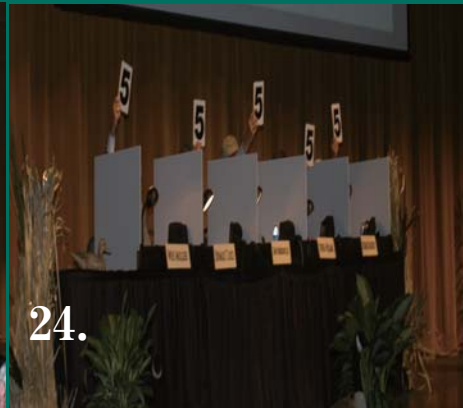
14. A boatload of young bird enthusiasts passed by the Padelford excursion, which was one of the many duck stamp events that people took advantage of. 15. Director of the Bloomington Art Center Jim Urie (R) poses with a friend. 16. FWS Director Dale Hall makes a point in the audience.

2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Photo Essay: A Window into History in the Making



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24.



25.



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27.



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29.

27.

First Place Winner,

a long-tailed duck and decoy by Joshua Spies.



30.

23., 24. Judges give the long-tailed entry high scores. 25. Director Dale Hall (M) awards the 1st place ribbon to Joshua Spies (L) as MC Paul Schmidt (R) looks on. 26. Onlookers appreciate the stunning art. 28. Winner, Joshua Spies. 29. Joe Hautman (L) signs posters for External Affairs ARD Jason Holm. 30. Brown partners from Gold C Accomodations pose for a snap shot. 32. Jim Hautman is a gracious second place winner.



32.

2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Long Time Goal Reached with a Long-Tailed Duck

The coveted first place title of the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest was won by 35-year old Joshua Spies with his visually stunning depiction of a long-tailed duck and a decoy.

“You never know,” the gracious artist said upon taking the microphone after the announcement, “I’ve entered it quite a few times. The best I’ve got previous was fourth. Last year, I got voted out. So artists out there, just keep pounding at it because you can do it.” The Watertown, South Dakota artist said the piece took him a few weeks to do.

With a legion of protruding cameras, probing questions and a sea of flashes in his face, Spies handled all media attention with graceful humility and seemingly an air of bewildered disbelief.

Question: You’re number 1. How do you feel?

Spies: *It hasn’t soaked in yet really. I mean honestly, it’s a lot of flash bulbs all of a sudden and I don’t know what to say. You know. I just ... it’s a lot of work... quite a few years entering. Last year I got voted out. So this year obviously it went pretty well. But it’s like to any artists out there, you just don’t give up. You pour everything you got into it.*

Question: What inspired you? Talk about your piece.

Spies: *Well, a couple of reasons. First of all, an old.. it’s formerly been called an old squaw, now it’s a long-tailed duck. Les Kuba painted [the duck] the only time it’s ever won, and it was in 1967. And he was originally from*

Minnesota. He passed away a couple of years ago now, and I don’t know, I just thought it was...(trails off)..He was actually friends with my grandfather too. So I thought, the heck with it, I’m gonna try the long-tailed duck (laughs).

Question: You’re from Watertown, so was Terry Redlin an inspiration?

Spies: *Yeah. [I] worked with him quite a bit. He’s a wonderful man, always helpful.*

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



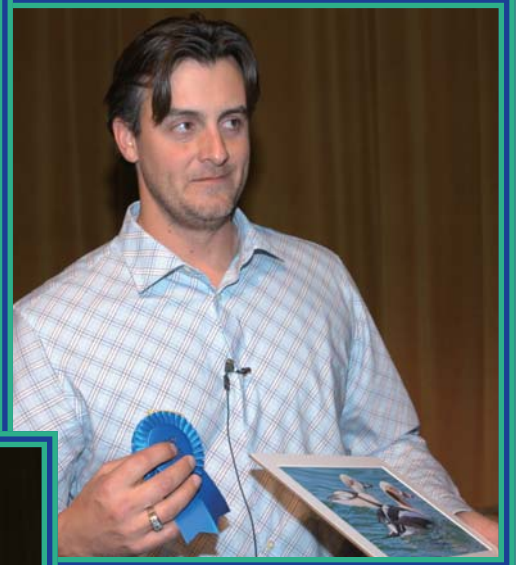
Above: Spies (L) poses for a quick photo with Director Dale Hall (R).

Below: Spies and his son with the partially finished piece.



2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Long Time Goal Reached with a Long-Tailed Duck



Top Left: Spies poses for a quick photo.
Top Right: Spies holds the first place ribbon and his prized piece.

Left: Spies and his wife in the middle of the frenzy.

FACTOID

In North American English it was formerly called Oldsquaw, though this name has fallen out of favour under influence of negative connotations of the word squaw in English usage. Some biologists have also feared that this name would be offensive to some Native American tribes involved in the conservation effort. [1] The American Ornithologists' Union (2000) stated that "political correctness" was not sufficient to change the name, but "to conform with English usage in other parts of the world", it officially adopted the name Long-tailed Duck.
– from Wikipedia

DUCK STAMP EVENTS

Padelford Birding Expedition

As part of the 2008 Duck Stamp Contest, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) teamed with Woodbury based Audubon Minnesota on a Mississippi birding expedition aboard the Padelford Riverboat.

The event held on October 15 was one in a series designed to both celebrate the historic contest, bird watch, and connect people with nature.

Dressed in colorful scarves and seasonal jackets, participants gathered on Harriet Island's chilly dock in St. Paul to take in the brilliant fall colors that were peaking and the migrating birds overhead.

Among a myriad of other birds, cruisers spied several bald

eagles, some in flight and others resting in their nests.

Partnership coordinator for Audubon Minnesota, Ron Windingstad and Duck Stamp lead Jim Leach both addressed the leisurely crowd of approximately 20-30 people. Both expressed extreme pleasure to be involved with the event.

"Audubon Minnesota and many of the other non-government organizations are really



Above: Migratory Bird's Bob Russell takes in a morning joe before boarding. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.



Above Left to Right: Ron Windingstad, Bob Russell, Nita Fuller, Jim Leach. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

Leach worked with many partners to bring this event together. "This specific event is being hosted by Audubon Minnesota," said Leach, "and through the Duck Stamp Contest we've tried to organize a real diverse partnership of organizations—really the conservation community of Minnesota."



Above: Chicagoans Take in the birding tour at the advice of their young daughter. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.

promoting the Duck Stamp," comments Windingstad, "because of the good it does not only for the waterfowl but also all the other species of birds that use these wetlands that the bird watchers go to in order to watch the birds."

Many onboard were tourists visiting the area who decided to take in the relaxing river ride for the sheer pleasure of it. But most riders had no idea that it was part of the Duck Stamp Contest, observed Refuge Assistant Regional Director, Nita Fuller who was also on the cruise. Most vowed, however, to visit the Bloomington Center for the Arts after hearing the Service staff and event sponsors rave about the contest and the beautiful and impressive art on display.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

Flood of 2008 From Devastation to Conservation

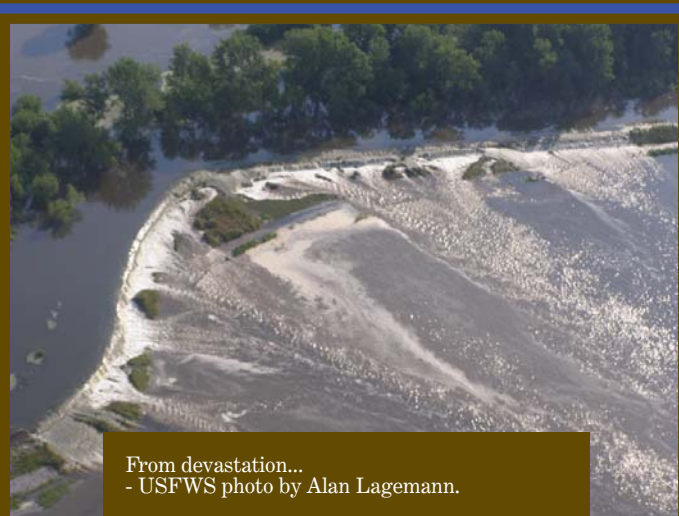
The flood of 2008 caused a great deal of damage and disruption to personal, business and agricultural property along the Mississippi river and major tributaries. Wildlife was also greatly affected and while some animals were displaced or even killed, others benefited from this “natural” event.

Early in the flood, water entered the Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge through a spillway constructed in the levee surrounding the refuge. Nearly 42,000 acre-feet of water was stored within the refuge levee and our hopes are that this helped to lessen some of the damage experienced in nearby communities.

As the flooding subsided and water was released from the refuge, wildlife use flourished. In August and September exposed mud flats provided essential resting and feeding habitat for over 10,000 migrating shorebirds. Bird watchers identified over 20 different species, many of which are rarely seen on the refuge. Hudsonian and marbled godwits, buff-breasted

sandpiper, red-necked phalarope, black-necked stilt, golden plover and upland sandpiper were just a few of the species on display. However spectacular the shorebirds may have been, refuge staff heard more from

Clarence Cannon NWR staff check on the spillway as flood waters start to enter the refuge. (L-R: Alan Lagemann, Dave Ellis, Curtis Parsons, Carolyn Gregory, Kurtis Pursley) - USFWS Photo by Candy Chambers.



From devastation...
- USFWS photo by Alan Lagemann.

by carpets of lush, new vegetation. Millets, nuts edges, smart weeds and other wet tolerant plants burst onto the scene. These plants were able to thrive late in the growing season due to the absence of competitive plants, such as cocklebur and velvet leaf, and their ability to grow and produce seed within a short period of time. Property around the refuge where water either slowly receded and/or still remains also experienced a similar result. These natural moist-soil plants will be a great benefit for migrating waterfowl as they feed on these highly nutritious plants.

The receding floodwaters captured within refuge wetland units have already received a great deal of use by teal and other early migrating waterfowl – more than in “dry” years. Additionally this “free” water will help significantly reduce the time and money spent to pump water on the refuge this fall.

All-in-all... Mother Nature is adjusting well to the flooding this summer. After all it is a part of the natural cycle of the floodplain.

-- Candace Chambers
R3-Great River NWR

visitors about the thousands of wading birds (herons and egrets) feasting on the explosion of frogs, fish, crayfish and other small critters that followed the flooding.

As the waters continued to recede, mud flats were replaced



18

Annada, Missouri residents deal once more with devastating floods.
- USFWS Photo by Dave Ellis.

FWS Studies Hydrokinetic Power Issues

Hydrokinetic projects in major waterways are among the latest endeavors as the United States looks for renewable energy resources. Consisting of turbines installed on the riverbed, hydrokinetic energy has become a focus for energy producers and resource managers. As producers seek permits through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for hydrokinetic projects, the Service is among many resource agencies faced with attempting to coordinate review and identify potential impacts. On the Mississippi River alone, about 60 projects have been proposed, 55 of them by Free-Flow-Power (FFP) Corporation.

In response, staff from the Service's Marion, Illinois, Ecological Services Sub-Office (MISO), working with the Corps of Engineers, organized a Mississippi River Hydrokinetic Energy Workshop, hosted by the Corps in Vicksburg, Mississippi on August 26 through 28.

The need for the workshop became apparent at the Marion Sub-Office early this year. In January 2008, representatives of FFP presented

information regarding their proposed projects and technology to the River Resources Action Team, the interagency team responsible for coordination of various projects in the Corps' St. Louis District.

Additionally, several members of the RRAT, including MISO staff met with representatives of FFP in March to further discuss the proposed projects and exchange information. During these discussions, FFP requested support for a proposal to expedite processing of their FERC license applications. This would involve selecting two to four "lead" sites to process through FERC's Integrated Licensing Process, which is the default process for hydrokinetic projects. With these sites, FFP would conduct detailed studies and collect information that would also be applicable to the remaining sites. These remaining sites are then proposed to be processed as a batch through the FERC's Traditional Licensing Process.

Given the complexities of the FERC's licensing processes and a new process developed for proposed hydrokinetic "pilot" projects, MISO staff conferred with Midwest Regional Office staff regarding a workshop. Additionally, it became apparent during meetings with FFP that they were unaware of the complex nature of coordination and approval of projects

or permits involving the Mississippi River (e.g., many agencies with many authorities and roles).

MISO staff took the lead in organizing the workshop, coordinating initially with the Corps and FERC. As workshop planning progressed, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Park Service were added to the

coordination loop. MISO staff developed the initial draft agenda, hosted numerous conference calls and revised the agenda based on input during the calls. MISO staff was also instrumental in addressing the logistics for the proposed workshop.

In total, 55 individuals attended the workshop representing five Service Field Offices, one Service Regional Office, five Corps Districts, four Corps Divisions, four USEPA Regional Offices, the National Park Service, Coast Guard, four state agencies, and FERC. The three companies that currently hold preliminary permits for Mississippi River hydrokinetic projects (FFP, Hydro Green, MARMC) presented information regarding their proposed projects. Other participants included the National Hydropower Reform Coalition, staff from Tulane University and two consultant companies interested in hydrokinetics (Evans-Hamilton Inc., and Think Energy Inc.).

During the workshop, MISO staff provided a Mississippi River primer for ecosystem restoration and other unique and competing uses and provided an overview of Service authorities and roles. Regional Office staff provided information on Service interest in hydrokinetic projects. Staff from the Lafayette, Louisiana, Field Office provided an Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation primer. MISO staff also moderated and facilitated the workshop. All of the agencies involved agreed that the workshop was a valuable mechanism for the exchange of information and that communication/collaboration should continue. A process for addressing further collaboration will be developed on a future conference call. FERC agreed to maintain the Mississippi River Hydrokinetic Energy Collaborative web site and all presentations from the workshop have been posted to this site (<http://ms-river-hydrokinetic.webexworkspace.com/login.asp?loc=&link=>).

Continued on page 29.



Above: Mark Pawlowski with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission presents information on FERC's licensing process. USFWS Photo by Matt Mangan.

Counting Bat Noses

New Software May Enhance Indiana Bat Population Surveys, Improve Techniques to Detect White-Nose Syndrome

Bat biologists taking part in the 2009 biennial winter surveys of the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) are currently gearing up – at the Service’s request - to head underground with digital cameras in tow. Digital photography is rapidly changing and improving how bat biologists traditionally estimate winter bat populations within hibernacula (i.e., caves and mines). Alas, as anyone who has spent a few hours or days manually identifying and counting thousands of tiny bat noses on a computer screen can quickly attest, ‘there has got to be a better way.’ A few bat counters have dared to dream of a day when photographs simply could be run through a software program and an accurate count of all the bats returned in an instant (\pm some acceptable amount of standardized error). Fortunately, the weary bat counters’ dreams may soon be closer to reality, thanks to some USDA Forest Service remote sensing specialists who recently accepted the challenge put before them.

The U.S. Forest Service is used to taking on management challenges associated with the Indiana bat and its habitat. The Indiana bat occurs on national forest lands in 14 states including Indiana’s Hoosier National Forest. The bat imaging project was proposed by Dale Weigel, a forester with the HNF, and Andy King, a biologist with the Service’s Bloomington, Ind., Ecological Services Field Office; it was submitted as part of a national competition to the Forest Service’s Remote Sensing Applications

Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The RSAC selected the unique bat imaging project for funding and will soon begin feasibility testing using state-of-the-art image recognition software. The Service’s ultimate goal is to develop and implement a program that will more quickly, consistently and accurately identify and estimate the number of individual bats within digital photographs. The Bloomington office will be providing the digital images for the feasibility tests.



Above: A large hibernating cluster of Indiana bats (*Myotis sodalis*) within Ray’s Cave, Indiana. Ray’s Cave held an estimated 77,687 bats during the biennial 2007 survey, making it the largest Indiana bat hibernaculum in the species’ 16-state winter range. USFWS photo by Andrew King.

In recent years, the Service and its partners have been taking steps to improve the accuracy of Indiana bat population estimates and trends, which ultimately affect the Service’s assessment of the bat’s recovery criteria. For example, in a 2006 Service-sponsored field test of bat surveyors, and those using digital photography had significantly less error in their population estimates than those using traditional survey techniques. Digital photography is also valuable because it can reduce field survey time/disturbance levels in hibernacula and produce permanent records. However, as a survey technique, digital photography is not without limitations. For example, states with large winter populations of Indiana bats (e.g.,

Indiana, Kentucky, New York, Illinois, Missouri, and West Virginia) rarely have adequate staffing or funds to pay someone to spend weeks in front of a computer screen distinguishing pinkish noses from bent wrists and counting tens of thousands of identified bat noses in hundreds of digital photographs. So, if the RSAC researchers are successful in testing and developing a standardized and automated system for estimating bat numbers from digital images, it will greatly benefit the Service and its partners in their Indiana bat recovery efforts.

In addition to digital images of normal, healthy bat clusters, the Service and its partners will be providing RSAC researchers with digital images of hibernating clusters with varying amounts of fungal growth on their noses, ears, and forearms that is associated with the newly emerging threat, white-nose syndrome (WNS). The current WNS outbreak apparently began at four hibernacula near Albany, New York, during the winter of 2006-2007 and rapidly spread this past winter to about 30 additional sites in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and perhaps Pennsylvania. At least five bat species, including the Indiana bat, have been affected by WNS, and mortality rates have exceeded 90 percent at some sites. As initial funding allows, RSAC researchers will test the feasibility of imaging software to quickly scan and accurately detect individual bats exhibiting fungal growth. Low levels of fungal growth, indicative of early onset of WNS, were not noticed at some affected sites until New York biologists later examined and discovered its presence in digitally enhanced photographs. If feasible, digital imaging software would provide an efficient means of conducting standardized WNS surveillance at bat hibernacula across the eastern United States and Canada.

–Andy King
Ecological Services
Bloomington, Ind.



The Birds!

Eighth Group of Endangered Whooping Cranes Depart on Ultralight-guided Flight to Florida

Fourteen young whooping cranes began their ultralight-led migration from central Wisconsin's Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on Oct. 17, 2008. This is the eighth group of birds to take part in a landmark project led by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), an international coalition of public and private groups that is reintroducing this highly imperiled species in eastern North America, part of its historic range. There are now 68 whooping cranes in the wild in eastern North America thanks to WCEP's efforts.

The four ultralight aircraft and juvenile cranes will be following a new route this year, passing through Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia to reach the birds' wintering habitats at Chassahowitzka and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuges along Florida's Gulf Coast.

The fourteen ultralight-led cranes will be split into two groups upon arrival in Florida--one group will winter at Chassahowitzka NWR and one group will spend the winter

at St. Marks NWR. The decision to split the birds comes after the loss in February 2007 of 17 of the 18 Class of 2006 whooping cranes in a severe storm at Chassahowitzka NWR. WCEP hopes the two separate wintering locations will help reduce the risk of another catastrophic loss.

In addition to the 14 birds being led south by ultralights, biologists from the International Crane Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reared six whooping cranes at Necedah NWR. The birds will be/were released in the company of older cranes from whom the young birds will learn the migration route. This is the fourth year WCEP has used this Direct Autumn Release method, which supplements the ultralight migrations.

Whooping cranes that take part in the ultralight and Direct Autumn Release reintroductions are hatched at the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md., and at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis. Chicks are raised under a strict isolation protocol and to ensure the birds remain wild, handlers adhere to a no-talking rule and wear costumes designed to mask the human form.

In 2001, project partner Operation Migration's pilots led the first whooping crane chicks, conditioned to follow their ultralight aircraft surrogates, south from Necedah NWR to Chassahowitzka NWR. Each subsequent year, WCEP biologists and pilots have conditioned and guided additional groups of juvenile cranes to Chassahowitzka NWR. Once led south, the cranes are able to migrate on their own, without assistance, in following years.

In the spring and fall, project staff from the International Crane Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service track and monitor the released cranes in an effort to learn as much as possible about their unassisted journeys and the habitat choices they make both along the way and on their summering and wintering grounds.

Most graduated classes of whooping cranes spend the summer in central Wisconsin, where they use areas on or near the Necedah NWR, as well as other public and private lands.

Whooping cranes were on the verge of extinction in the 1940s. Today, there are only about 525 birds in existence, 375 of them in the wild. Aside from the 68 birds reintroduced by WCEP, the only other migrating population of whooping cranes nests at the Wood Buffalo National Park in the Northwest Territories of Canada and winters at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Gulf Coast. A non-migrating flock of approximately 40 birds lives year-round in the central Florida Kissimmee region.

Whooping cranes, named for their loud and penetrating unison calls, live and breed in wetland areas, where they feed on crabs, clams, frogs and aquatic plants. They are distinctive animals, standing five feet tall, with white bodies, black wing tips and red crowns on their heads.

WCEP asks anyone who encounters a whooping crane in the wild to please give them the respect and distance they need. Do not approach birds on foot within 200 yards; try to remain in your vehicle; do not approach in a vehicle within 100 yards.

Continued on page 24.



Whooping Cranes in flight, courtesy of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP).

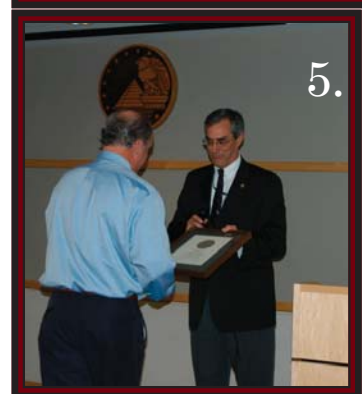
Tom Melius

New Midwest Regional Director Addresses the RO

Regional Director Tom Melius addressed employees on Oct. 28 at the Regional Office. As a South Dakota and Wisconsin native, Melius explained that he was extremely happy to be back in the Midwest. Melius also said that he is open to hearing from employees with regard to specific agenda priorities. After his address he opened the floor to questions from employees.

He also presented Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley with an award for 30-years of service. Afterwards, Wooley and the Assistant Regional Director of External Affairs Jason Holm presented Melius with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region blue fleece vest to welcome him to the region.

--Valerie Rose Redmond, *External Affairs*



1. ARD Jason Holm (R) and Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley (L) present Regional Director Tom Melius (C) with a welcome gift. 2. Attentive RO employees listen intently to Melius' comments. 3. Melius addresses RO employees. 4. Melius (R) answers questions from Claudia Wondra (C) and Andrea Kirk (L). 5. Melius thanks Wooley for 30 years of service.

Note: See Melius' biography on the next page.



Tom Melius

Tom Melius

The New Midwest Regional Director



Tom Melius was appointed as the Midwest Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Oct. 12, 2008. Prior to his Midwest region post, he completed a successful watch over the vast, rugged expanse of the Service's Alaska region.

In his new role, Melius will govern over a region that employs 1,088 people, manages 1.29 million acres of land and has field offices in eight states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

A native of the Great Plains, Melius brings a diverse background and a wealth of experience to the Midwest. Prior to his stewardship in Alaska, he served as Assistant Director for External Affairs in the Washington Office from March 2003 to April 2006. He oversaw the national programs for Public Affairs, Congressional and Legislative Affairs, and the office of the Native American Liaison. He also provided oversight to the Service's National Conservation Training Center located in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Prior to his time in External Affairs, Melius served as Assistant Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs. In that position he developed policy, advised the Directorate, and served as its representative on issues relating to the conservation and management of migratory birds, implementation of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and wetlands programs, Federal Duck Stamps, federal grant programs, and conservation partnerships. He was responsible for and directed the offices of Migratory Bird Management, Bird Habitat Conservation, Conservation Partnership Liaison, and Federal Aid.

From July 1997 to October 1998, Melius was the Director of Conservation Policy and Senior Advisor at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. From January 1995 to June 1997, he was a senior professional staff member on the U.S. Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, where he formulated policy for fishery management with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Coast Guard; and for coastal programs with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He also advised the Committee on international conservation matters involving wildlife trade, marine mammals and endangered species.

From 1985 to 1995, Melius was a professional staff member on the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries in the U.S. House of Representatives. There he advised the Committee on issues concerning fish and wildlife legislation.



Tom Melius

WALL 'O LAP TOPS

WALL 'O LAP TOPS

The 28 lap tops seen in the pictures represent about 35% of the approximately 80 lap tops that were ordered with Obsolete Computer Replacement funds from Washington. All of these lap tops, as well as about 35 lap tops that were purchased by programs with their own end-of-year funds, will be set up by Information Technology Management (ITM) to meet Service standards for encryption and wireless access.

--Loyd Mitchell, Field Office Team Leader/Notes Admin and IT Specialist



Outdoorsman Tony Dean Passes

Outdoorsman, columnist and conservationist Tony Dean passed away on October 19 at the age of 67 after complications from an appendectomy. The South Dakotan was nationally renowned for his television show, *Tony Dean Outdoors* and his radio show *Dakota Backroads*.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Lap tops destined for the field overflow.

Whooping Cranes Continued.

Also, please remain concealed and do not speak loudly enough that the birds can hear you. Finally, do not trespass on private property in an attempt to view whooping cranes.

Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership founding members are the International Crane Foundation, Operation Migration, Inc., Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and National Wildlife Health Center, the National Fish

and Wildlife Foundation, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and the International Whooping Crane Recovery Team.

Many other flyway states, provinces, private individuals and conservation groups have joined forces with and support WCEP by donating resources, funding and personnel. More than 60 percent of the project's budget comes from private sources in the form of grants, public donations and corporate sponsors.

A Wisconsin Whooping Crane Management Plan that describes

project goals and management and monitoring strategies shared and implemented by the partners is online at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/birds/wcrane/wcraneplan.htm>.

For more information on the project, its partners and how you can help, visit the WCEP web site at <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org>.

-WCEP-

--Joan Garland, International Crane Foundation, Daniel Peterson, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

Great Lakes Wind Collaborative A Unique Forum for Wind Power

As the cost of oil climbs, people around the globe are looking to renewable sources of fuel. Renewable sources of energy – solar, wind or water movement – seem to hold the answer. Wind power is especially intriguing to many – a seemingly limitless source of clean energy.

All across the United States, wind farms are springing up, with plans for many more on the drawing board. The Great Lakes Region has the capacity for providing a major portion of the nation's energy derived from wind. For example, according to the American Wind Energy Association, Illinois ranked third behind Texas and Colorado for new wind energy installations in 2007, adding 592 megawatts of new wind power generation. Wind power is seen as good business: the Department of Energy estimates the Great Lakes area's wind capacity has the potential to produce \$80 billion in economic activity and 300,000 jobs.

With those numbers, it's easy to see why wind power is a high stakes game involving myriad interests represented by a large number of stakeholders. The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) acknowledges the value of exploring and developing sustainable energy sources, including wind. At the same time, the Service must consider impacts of wind turbines on trust resources, including migratory birds and some species of bats. Sited along migratory routes, turbines can individually and cumulatively kill large numbers of birds and bats.

The Service's traditional approach

to reviewing potential energy projects is case-by-case, which is often time-consuming, laborious, and contentious, as all stakeholders vie for their interests. Furthermore, a project-by-project approach misses the landscape context – multiple projects scattered across the landscape creates a matrix of projects through which migratory birds and bats



must pass. Making review of projects even more challenging is the fact that there is no single entity that regulates the siting, construction, and operation of all projects consistently across the country. That's why the Service's Midwest Region took initiative to help establish the Great Lakes Wind Collaborative.

"The Great Lakes Wind Collaborative offers a unique forum for wind power stakeholders to better understand each others' interests. This forum is critical to developing sustainable wind energy in the Great Lakes states and provinces. It will allow us to explore ways to facilitate

wind energy development while, at the same time, doing it in ways that are compatible with migratory birds, bats, and other fish and wildlife resources," said Bob Krska, Region 3's Ecological Services Division Chief for Conservation Planning Assistance. "By focusing at the regional level, we work through problems and solutions locally, thereby allowing all stakeholders to meet most of their priority needs."

The Great Lakes Wind Collaborative came together after wind power stakeholders met at the conference "Toward Wildlife-friendly Wind Power: A Focus on the Great Lakes Basin" in 2006 and a Service-led follow-up Great Lakes wind power workshop at the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference that same year. These two venues brought together a range of interests and highlighted the need for a forum in which stakeholders could freely discuss concerns and ideas. In 2007, the Great Lakes Wind Collaborative was established. The group is supported administratively by the Great Lakes Commission.

While there are other groups examining wind power issues at a national level, what sets the Great Lakes Wind Collaborative apart is the specific focus on the Great Lakes Region. Members of the

collaborative represent a cross-section of all wind power stakeholder groups from the eight states and two Canadian provinces that surround the Great Lakes. They are tackling challenges that are unique to the wildlife resources, geography, and demography of the region, allowing the group to consider the entire region holistically to identify opportunities and impacts.

The collaborative functions through Steering and Advisory committees and work groups; Region 3 participates on both the Advisory and Steering Committees and Service biologists participate on several of the work groups. Continued on page 29.

Threatened and Misunderstood Reptiles in the Midwest

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is partnering with the Friends of Shiawassee NWR Central Michigan University (CMU), and Potter Park Zoo to study one of the most threatened and least understood reptiles in the Midwest, the eastern fox snake. The global range of this imperiled species is confined to the coastal plain of parts of Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario.

Further, this once common species has declined drastically from loss of coastal wetlands, habitat fragmentation, and persecution due to mistaken identification as a venomous species. Consequently, Michigan and Ontario rank this snake as a threatened species and it is a species of special concern in Ohio. Shiawassee Refuge provides extensive areas of wetlands, grasslands, and riparian habitats occupied by the eastern fox snake.

Additionally, Shiawassee Refuge is one of only three National Wildlife Refuges in which this species is known to occur. Thus, the refuge has an important opportunity to maintain, enhance, and restore eastern fox snake habitat.

However, very little is known about the refuge's eastern fox snake population, including abundance, age and sex ratios, genetic diversity, habitat preferences, nesting sites, hibernacula, daily and seasonal movements, and mortality factors. Further, no formal program to monitor population trends exists for

this species at the refuge. Meanwhile, all observers state that refuge fox snakes have declined significantly in abundance.

The refuge has formed a partnership with CMU to study the refuge's eastern fox snake population. A Master's degree candidate began conducting a radiotelemetry based study in spring 2008 which will continue in 2009. This study will help fill in the many gaps in the general life history information for this species.

Currently, twelve snakes are roaming the refuge with radio transmitters surgically implanted by the Potter Park Zoo. This study is already revealing important information. For example, road mortality could be an important threat to refuge snakes. The refuge is crossed by few public roads. However, these roads intersect with rivers which the snakes use as travel corridors. Consequently, these intersections appear to be a fatal funnel for fox snakes.

One transmitter bearing snake was run over by a vehicle on M-13, near the Cass River. Another snake was found dead on

Center Road next to the Tittabawassee River.

Better news is that the refuge may have more eastern fox snakes than previously thought. The graduate researcher has captured more than 40 snakes so far. Of these, only two were captured more than once. Also interesting, the majority of refuge fox snakes are large, some over five feet long.

This study has been funded through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Cost Share grant with funding and in kind match provided by CMU and Potter Park Zoo. This study has also been facilitated greatly by the Friends of Shiawassee NWR who is administering the grant funds.

Shiawassee NWR Manager Steve Kahl holds an eastern fox snake. USFWS photo courtesy Paul Hess



Moreover, it will provide information about eastern fox snake population demographics, movement patterns, and habitat use specific to the refuge. This assessment is a critical first step to develop a conservation strategy for this imperiled species at the refuge. An eastern fox snake being anesthetized before radio implantation surgery at Potter Park Zoo.

--Steve Kahl, Shiawassee NWR Refuge Manager

Duck Stamp Lead Jim Leach

Below: Jim Leach aboard the Padelford on the Mississippi.

Under the charismatic leadership of refuge supervisor Jim Leach, the historic 2008 Duck Stamp Contest event soared into the air as high as the long-tailed duck's sea is wide.

The stellar affair began on Sept. 20 with the Youth Waterfowl Hunt at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), sponsored by the Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

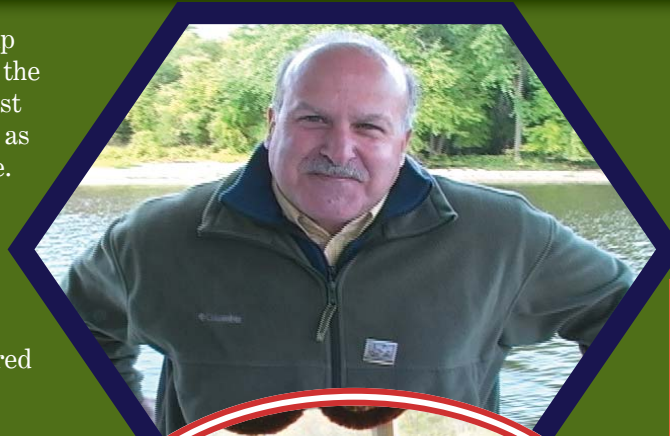
The historic event attracted dignitaries from all levels including Bloomington Mayor Gene Winstead who spoke at the unveiling of the art work along with Refuge Chief Nita Fuller.

Events included among others, a kids and nature day, two wildlife photography workshops, a hunting expo, a birding tour, judges reception, and a poster signing with last year's winner Joe Hautman.

On the last day of the event, Leach presented Regional Director Robyn Thorson with a proclamation from Governor Tim Pawlenty, proclaiming Oct. 18 Duck Stamp Day.



Leach pulled together partners from every corner of the state,



Leach and wife on the Padelford Riverboat.

Cabelas, Pheasants Forever; Audubon Minnesota, Bloomington Center for the Arts, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wildlife Forever; Ducks Unlimited and the Bell Museum, among others to pull off an unforgettable competition.

Focusing on the big picture, Leach instituted fluid lines of communication and motivated his team to excel. The team took their assignments and executed them flawlessly to produce an extraordinary event that is unmatched in the Federal Duck Stamp Program's 75-year history. He considered ideas from every level that would ensure the success of the contest.

The event culminated on Oct. 18 with the second round of judging that gave a big win to 35 year-old South Dakota artist, Joshua Spies for his depiction of a long-tailed duck and decoy.



At the Partners Appreciation event on Oct. 21 Regional Director Robyn Thorson raved that she didn't think it could have gone any better.

"The duck stamps—we always look at as something for hunters," Leach said, looking out on the Mississippi landscape from the Padelford river boat. "But they are much, much more than that. The value for the duck stamps for the American public goes far beyond the hunting community. It really is integral to the conservation of threatened or endangered species, and to habitats that are threatened like prairie wetlands and grasslands. It also benefits our grassland birds, so this partnership is much, much more than just focused on duck stamps or ducks. It's really broadened to include the conservation community of Minnesota."

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

Around the Region

Celebrating Excellence



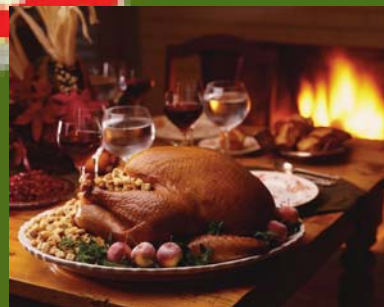
Left: Retirees gather at the Holiday Inn Select for the 2008 Retiree Reunion. Photo by Valerie Rose Redmond.



Left: Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge; USFWS biologists identify collection of mussels. Photo by Edward De Vries.



Left: Refuge Appreciation Day was held on Oct. 4 at the Snakey Point Marsh at the Boyd Trailhead parking area in Gibson County, Ind.



Happy Thanksgiving



Quotes of the Month

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul. ~John Muir

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished. ~Lao Tzu

Hydrokinetic Power Issues Continued

In addition to organizing the workshop, MISO staff provided comments and intervention information for nine Mississippi River and two Ohio River hydrokinetic energy projects in FY 2008. MISO staff also organized a meeting with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Missouri Department of Conservation to specifically discuss Middle Mississippi River projects.

The discussion focused on project areas for which concerns for fish and wildlife resources are elevated (e.g., the Chain of Rocks area). The group also discussed areas which are not currently permitted but which would be considered unsuitable for hydrokinetic projects due to their importance for fish and wildlife resources (e.g., Cottonwood Island). The group also discussed which project areas may be appropriate as “lead” sites for evaluation by FFP. The results of these discussions will be written up and provided to FFP to assist in their project planning. Coordination with FFP is ongoing.

The next step should involve further sharing of information to FFP regarding “lead” site selection and developing a study plan to ensure fish and wildlife issues are addressed comprehensively and in a straight forward manner. This will require coordination with federal and state researchers to develop issues into research questions and determining the best approach for answering those questions.

--Georgia Parham
External Affairs

Great Lakes Wind Collaborative Continued

When the collaborative held its first meeting in May 2008, it attracted 120 policy makers, wind industry professionals, government agency representatives, utilities and municipalities, along with conservation groups. Participants included Region 3's Jeff Gosse, who presented information on potential wind facility interaction with wildlife. Many

attendees visited “Steel Winds,” once a Bethlehem steel plant and now the nation’s largest urban wind farm.

At the end of the two-day session, the participants had laid the groundwork for working groups to explore issues such as a regional wind atlas, a regional approach to planning, siting and permitting wind projects, the potential for the collaboration to serve as a clearing house for Great Lakes studies and wind information, cumulative environmental impacts, economic costs

and benefits of wind, and issues related to offshore siting of wind projects.

For more information, check out the Great Lakes Wind Collaborative Web site at <http://www.glc.org/energy/wind/>

--Georgia Parham
External Affairs

Thank you for entering your journal reports and photographs in the Fish and Wildlife Journal (aka. ARS)
<http://ars.fws.gov>.