



# U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Inside Region 3



July 2008



**MV Togue  
Sails Into  
History!**



**Tomah VA  
Fishing Day!**



**A Home Town  
Event  
with Joe Hautman**



**CAUGHT ONE!**

# 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!

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## Features

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.

Next month we will introduce another regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's corner will feature the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: [valerie\\_redmond@fws.gov](mailto:valerie_redmond@fws.gov)

*On the Cover:* Inner-city Youth Fishing Day and Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge; Photo by: Valerie Rose Redmond; Duck stamp photo, courtesy Joe Hautman; Veteran receiving a prize for fishing; Staff photo. History making MV Togue at port; USFWS photo;

**Save the Date:** Saturday, July 12, 2008  
Join Joe Hautman, the 2008-2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner, for his home state celebration of the 75th Anniversary Federal Duck Stamp. Meet the Artist and Celebrate Wildlife Conservation Art at the Gainey Conference Center of the University of St. Thomas 2480 S. County Road 45, Owatonna, MN 55060 507-446-4460.



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By Aaron Woldt



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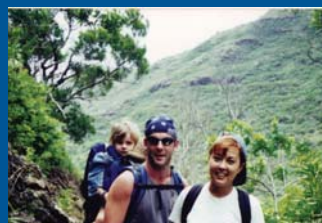
By Valerie Rose Redmond



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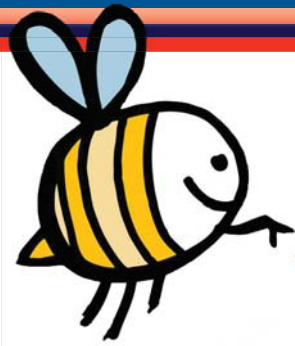


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*The Quick Hike*

By Jason Holm





# The Buzz



## International Migratory Bird Day Celebration!

The Michigan Private Lands Office, Potter Park Zoological Society and Fenner Nature cosponsored their 12th annual Migratory Bird Day celebration 31. Held at the Potter Park Zoo in Lansing, Michigan, the event provided approximately 3,500 zoo visitors the opportunity to learn more about migratory birds. "This was a record turnout, both in terms of visitors and support from volunteers," noted Zoological Society volunteer coordinator Michele Fox. Seventy volunteers, staff from five organizations spent approximately 350 total hours helping with 20 activities to increase public awareness and understanding of migratory birds. New activities including a "tundra to tropics" migration route, a "bird tree" to record participation, and a spotting scope station. "We've had families return year after year," said Jim Hudgins, Michigan Private Lands Office. "Just as the kids have grown, we've made this event grow - this was our best celebration . . . so far!"

--Jim Hudgins,  
R3-Michigan PLO



Center International

on Saturday, May

in Lansing, Michigan, the event

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Above: Puddles, the blue goose mascot of the National Wildlife Refuge System, shows kiddies how to ride a camel at the Potter Park Zoo in Lansing, Mich.; Photo by Jacob Hudgins.

On June 6, 2008, Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in McGregor, Minn. held their 2nd Annual Family Fun Day. The goal of the event was to provide local kids and families with a unique experience to learn about nature and to appreciate it through a fun and interactive way. The event was organized and run by the refuge staff, volunteers, and the friends group. Based on the turn out of nearly 150 people, the staff and volunteers felt like it was a huge success. --Peter Rea, CIP Summer Intern Park Ranger; Rice Lake NWR



Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Fishery Biologist Jim McFee holding a five and a half foot, 72 pound lake sturgeon captured on the Detroit River in Wyandotte, Mich. using setlines during the spring assessment. Photo credit James Boase.

### Mark Your Calendars!

The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest is coming to Minnesota!

October 17-18, 2008

Bloomington Art Center

Bloomington, Minn.

# Network Biology in the Midwest Region



Stands of the native bamboo (*Arundinaria gigantea*), also known as canebrakes, have largely disappeared from our nation's bottomland hardwood forests. Where canebrakes still exist, they usually are highly degraded and scattered. While a quick literature review produces much information related to canebrake loss through agriculture conversion and wildfire exclusion and resulting sedimentation and extirpations, the same search yields more restoration questions than answers.

Canebrake restoration is a model of restoration need combined with restoration uncertainties. Although management uncertainty isn't a new problem, a new approach to biology in the Midwest Region is providing new ways to proceed when challenged with uncertainty. The new approach utilizes biological networks that the Midwest Region established in 2006 following a regional biologist workshop. Biologists and managers attending that workshop identified poor communication and collaboration as barriers to success in the Midwest Region.

The Midwest Region's biological networks are loosely based on Bailey's Classification System. This resulted in the establishment of four networks within the Region: Prairie, Big Rivers, Great Lakes and Eastern Broadleaf Forest Networks. Each network has a leader and includes all refuges, wetland management districts, and private lands offices within the network boundary. Network communication has taken many forms but includes annual meetings, conference calls, emails and reports. Network collaboration has also taken many forms. For example, the Big Rivers Network combined resources to survey massasauga rattlesnakes, a candidate species, on the Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The Great Lakes Network is collaborating to control invasive plants. Three refuges used the Challenge Cost Share Program to secure funds for a Minnesota Conservation Crew. While at Minnesota's Rice Lake and Sherburne National Wildlife Refuges

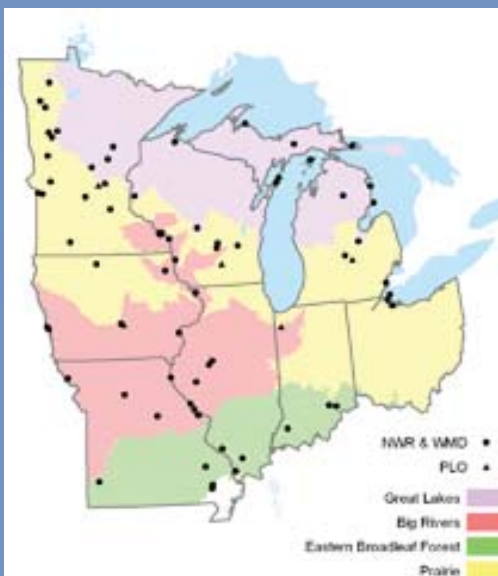
and Wisconsin's Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge, the crew helped map and treat invasive plants including buckthorn, honeysuckle, and purple loosestrife.

Several Wetland Management Districts and two National Wildlife Refuges within the Prairie Network have joined forces to write their Habitat Management Plans. Writing the Habitat Management Plans at the network level is possible because the properties are all from the same ecological unit and as a result, have many management actions in common. Collective plan writing produces a better final product and is more efficient than each station independently writing plans.

The Eastern Broadleaf Forest Network is collaborating to restore canebrakes. The Network is bringing together experts from academia, government, and non-government agencies to assemble as much information as possible. The Network will then collaborate to answer remaining restoration questions. Examples include: Should giant cane be propagated vegetatively or from seed? How can prescribed fire and silvicultural practices be varied to stimulate canebrake growth and development.

The Midwest Region's network approach to biology isn't the only approach that has been attempted. It is the only approach that has resulted in immediate, wide-scale collaboration and effective communication. In their short life, the networks have moved in different directions but all have provided valuable products and improved biology in the Region.

--Richard King  
Necedah National  
Wildlife Refuge



Above: Midwest region biological networks;



# Refuge Spotlight

## Honored for Valor

The Department of the Interior honored two Refuge System employees with Valor Awards for their dramatic rescue of an angler trapped during a night in December 2007 in the icy Mississippi River. The employees were among 92 honored May 13 during the 65th Honors Convocation of the Department.

Russell A. Engelke and Darryn J. Witt, both from the Savanna District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, were cited for braving icy currents to save the life of a fisherman stuck for 15 hours when his hovercraft capsized off the Illinois' shore. Engelke and Witt launched their airboat in the dark after several rescue attempts failed to reach two stranded anglers.

Engelke and Witt reached one victim – perched on top of the overturned hovercraft – at 10:30 p.m. They

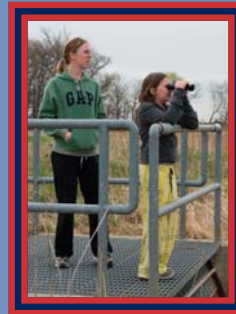
attached a line from their – airboat to the overturned craft and secured the victim, who was unable to move. A rescue swimmer ran another line to shore. Engelke and Witt held onto the victim and hovercraft and were pulled to shore. The victim was airlifted to the hospital. Engelke and Witt then returned to the icy river to search for the other man until deteriorating conditions stopped the rescue mission. Unfortunately, the second angler passed away.

The Department of the Interior each year recognizes acts of ‘courage, valor, selflessness and exceptional management’ in men and women nominated by their agencies. During the May 13 ceremonies, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne said the dedication and commitment of all honorees ‘serve as a guiding light to us all.’

Right: Nicole and Cali Luna view waterfowl from the vantage point of a water control structure on the Wildlife Drive during a birding tour for beginners at the International Migratory Bird Day event at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge; Photo by Al Ferber; Far Right: Marv Ziner, Friends member and coordinator for the Friends Plant Sale prepares the plants for the sale; Photo by Al Ferber;

## International Migratory Bird Day

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) was celebrated at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, May 10, with 52 birders observing a total 94 species of birds. At 7:00 a.m. 23 experienced and intermediate birders broke into two groups for the “Songbird Search,” hiking the Blue Hill Trail to look for warblers and vireos before heading to the Wildlife Drive for grassland and wetland species. These groups were led by Jay Hamernick, retired refuge manager, and Lyle Bradley, retired teacher. At 8:30 a.m. 29 beginning birders and families gathered for the “Birds In the Wetlands” tour. Five refuge volunteers experienced in birding each took



Above: Ice rescue; USFWS photo;

a small group to the Wildlife Drive. Three young birders and their parents were repeat visitors from last year. This year’s theme, Tundra to Tropics, focused on how birds choose and then use habitats during their migration journey. Outreach efforts for International Migratory Bird Day included the distribution of IMBD posters to 38 schools in five school districts located within a 25 mile radius of the refuge and to libraries in five communities. The Friends of Sherburne held a Plant Sale in conjunction with IMBD which brought an additional 82 people to the refuge.

--Nancy Haugen,  
R3-Sherburne NWR

# Fish Day!



## Inner City Youth Fishing Day

City youth beamed like the sun that finally made an appearance for Youth Fish Day 2008, on May 31 at Bass Ponds on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The glorious day was only out done by the unadulterated bliss emanating from the students young faces as they cast their lines in to the stock filled pond. Custom designed for fishing



fun, the half day event began for the students from Minnesota Valley Partner Schools, American Indian Magnet and Windom Dual Spanish Immersion, with a rotating station schedule for instruction on casting, water conservation, water safety and rope knotting. "Youth Fish Day is a great way to connect kids to nature," said Beth A. Ullenberg, Supervisory Visitor Services Manager at the Valley. "We focus on a diversity of students that my not otherwise get an opportunity to learn to fish. Each student goes home with a new

fishing pole and starter tackle." The event culminated with a lip smacking hot dog and walleye lunch prepared by the Red Lake Nation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). "This National Fishing Week partnership event provides Inner-City Youth (with) an opportunity to enjoy the world of recreational fishing," said native american liaison, John Leonard. "The hands-on program provides building blocks to support enjoyment of the outdoors and the importance of our values we share with nature." --*Valerie Rose Redmond, External Affairs*

## Tomah VA Fishing Day

Annual outreach events that touch the lives of so many are important in sustaining partnerships and ultimately the mission of the USFWS. Because of the positive relationships, not only do the employees of the Service benefit, but also the entire community.

For more than 50 years, Fish and Wildlife Service employees at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) have annually raised a variety of game fish species for stocking in public waters, including the American Legion Fishing Pond at the Tomah Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center. Angling is a very popular activity at the medical center that provides VA clients with many hours of outdoor

recreational opportunities. Since 1991, local American Legion members, Fish and Wildlife Service staff and volunteers from the Genoa NFH, the La Crosse Fishery Resources Office, and the La Crosse Fish Health Center have helped sponsor a hospital-wide fishing tournament at the pond. The 2005 fishing tourney was held on May 18 with approximately 50 veterans. Several members of the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Services (FUMFS) and Tomah Middle School students were on hand to aid FWS employees as well as veterans who needed assistance angling. Species such as rainbow trout, largemouth bass, bluegills, and crappies were successfully caught from the pond. Successful anglers registered their catch, both large and small, to win prizes awarded by the Tomah American Legion and FWS. Popularity of this annual event, complete with a lunchtime fish-fry prepared and served by Service staff, has grown into a highly anticipated and rewarding springtime event for all who participate in it. --*Heidi L. Keuler, La Crosse National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office*



Above: USFWS employees have fun helping kids at Inner City Youth day.

Above: Tomah middle school youth and USFWS employee, Darla Wenger, helping vets with their catches.



# MV Togue Sails into History

The Motor Vessel (MV) Togue's 18 year history of lake trout stocking and fishery assessment in the upper Great Lakes came to an end this May with the sale of the vessel at public auction. The MV Spencer F. Baird, christened in September 2006, replaced the MV Togue and is currently used by the Service to stock lake trout and conduct fishery assessments in Lake Michigan, Huron and Superior. The public auction closed with a winning bid of \$54,550 and the vessel was removed from its dock at Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Alpena, Mich.

From 1989 to 2006, the MV Togue stocked more than 60 million lake trout fingerlings and yearlings in the upper Great Lakes in support of agency lake trout rehabilitation efforts. The vessel was originally built as a shrimp trawler, and was acquired by the Service in January 1987 in a U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida consent judgment. Service crew brought the vessel to its home port of Cheboygan, Mich. in spring 1987. Eight under deck fish tanks capable of holding 7,500

gallons of water combined were added to the vessel in 1989 to house hatchery produced fish.

Alpena NFWCO staff and MV Baird vessel crew removed more than 75 unique items from the MV Togue for historical preservation. Fishery biologist Aaron Woldt is working with the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepardstown, W. Va., and Service Heritage Committee to ensure these artifacts are preserved. The artifacts will then be displayed at NCTC to document the vessel's historical importance to lake trout restoration efforts in the Great Lakes.

Alpena NFWCO works to conserve and manage aquatic species and habitat within U. S. waters of Lake Huron, western Lake Erie, and connecting waterways of the St. Mary's River and Huron-Erie Corridor.

-- Aaron Woldt, Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

## *Saving the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly*



**A Safe Harbor** Agreement to conserve the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly in DuPage County, Ill., has been drafted by the DuPage County Forest Preserve District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chicago Field Office. The agreement addresses conservation measures at the Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve.

Safe Harbor Agreements are voluntary agreements between the Service and cooperating non-federal landowners. They are designed to benefit federally endangered and threatened species by giving landowners assurances that at no future time would the Service impose restrictions on their land as a result of conservation actions. These agreements essentially relieve landowners of liability under the Endangered Species Act if conservation practices on their land attract and/or perpetuate federally listed species.

The draft Safe Harbor Agreement enables the district to restore small streams favored by the Hine's emerald dragonfly as breeding habitat. The new habitat and the Hine's emerald dragonfly population would be monitored to gauge the success of the project and to adapt to achieve the greatest conservation benefit for the species. The species was listed as endangered in 1995, largely due to loss of suitable habitat.

--Kristopher Lah, Chicago Field Office



Above: History making MV Togue at portside; USFWS photo;

Above: HED Dorsal male rests on a finger; Photo by P. Burton;

# Partnerships Detroit River Style



This summer the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is embarking on a major project to promote environmental education and sustainability on its signature property, the Humbug Marsh Unit. With the vision of creating a national and regional example of conservation, environmental sustainability, stewardship, and environmental education, a site plan was created for a portion of this 410-acre parcel that focuses on interpretation of the site's natural features and the use of sustainable materials.

The features proposed for this portion of the unit, called the "education triangle," include:

- One third mile of universally accessible trails constructed out of recycled crushed concrete excavated from an unused roadway.
- One fourth mile of rustic paths covered in wood chips made from trees that were removed from the site in preparation for construction
- A wetland boardwalk that uses decking made out of recycled wood, plastic bags, and milk jugs
- A stream crossing using recycled utility

poles as the posts for a hand rail system and mechanically stabilized earth for wing walls

- And a 32' x 20' environmental education shelter, equipped with skylights and enclosed storage space.

The design process for this project was a truly collaborative venture, incorporating input and feedback from Refuge staff, area teachers, an engineering firm named NTH Consultants, the Navy Seabees, the Refuge's friends group called the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, and many community members.

An effort to showcase sustainability on the site resulted in the innovative reuse of materials that were salvaged from within our own property or donated by area businesses. Through educational signage, these sustainable features will serve as an example for reusing materials in new ways to reduce both the amount of waste going into landfill and the use of virgin materials.

The Navy Seabees will begin construction of the trails, shelter, and

stream crossing in July. The Seabees are using this project as a training exercise and are generously donating their time, talent, and equipment to the project. The project is planned to be completed by fall, in time for full usage by school groups and other visitors.

--Rebecca Sowder, Detroit River

## A Home Town Event

You are invited to attend a celebration of wildlife and art at the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Artist Home State Event. This year's winning Federal Duck Stamp Artist, Minnesotan Joe Hautman, has chosen to make the event a celebration of conservation, art, artists and family by making it an afternoon event (outdoors) at the University of St. Thomas Gainey Center in Owatonna, Minn.

The event will run from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, July 12. Afternoon events are FREE and going on throughout the day so bring your family and friends, stop in anytime and stay as long, or little, as you'd like.

A short program will occur at 3:30, followed by an opportunity to have Joe Hautmann and others sign art, stamps and memorabilia. In addition to Joe, many other Minnesota artists who have won the Federal Duck Stamp will also be at the event. (Minnesota has more winning Duck Stamp Artists than any other state).

--Chuck Traxler, External Affairs



Above: Photo courtesy of Joe Hautman, the 2008-2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner.



# Historic Addition for Glacial Ridge

As part of a suite of wetlands acquisitions and conservation grant approvals, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved \$4 million to purchase more than 18,000 acres of prairie wetland and associated grassland habitat for the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Minnesota – one of the largest purchases in history using dollars generated from Federal Duck Stamp sales and import duties on firearms and ammunition.

The acquisition of the 18,118 acres for the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge in Polk County, Minnesota will provide important wetland and grassland habitat for mallards, northern pintails, blue-winged teal, tundra swans, sandhill cranes, prairie chickens and many other waterfowl and grassland bird species.

Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson thanked members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, Chaired by Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne and including Senators Cochran and Lincoln, Representatives Dingell and Gilchrest, Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer and Environmental Protection Agency

Administrator Stephen L. Johnson for their support.

“I am proud that the prestigious MBCC, which addresses North America’s top migratory bird priorities, recognized the significant role of prairies in waterfowl and wetland conservation,” said Thorson. “This is the largest Commission

authorization in decades and it rewards a remarkable partnership with the Polk County Board of Commissioners, The Nature Conservancy and many others who were tireless in crafting a bold plan for Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge.”

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge Manager Dave Bennett is excited about the opportunity this authorization brings to the area. “This action by the Commission helps solidify the efforts of more than 30 organizations and agencies who partnered to help the recovery of the tallgrass prairie, the most imperiled ecosystem in North America,” said Bennett. “This will insure that restored tallgrass prairie habitats will be managed for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.”

Thorson echoed support for the future legacy but also linked it with the past. “As a Federal official,” she stated, “conserving the natural resource heritage of Polk County is a great event in my career. As a granddaughter of an immigrant Polk County farmer, it is a great event in my life.”

Bennett also mentioned the value this action and the refuge will bring to the local community. “We’ll be working with local officials, residents and other partners to develop public use plans designed to protect wildlife habitat while also supporting Polk County tourism. Those of us who are privileged to live and work here have long understood the globally significant wildlife habitat this area supports,” said Bennett. “I’m thankful for the Commission’s reinforcement of those values and I hope that the significance of this action will encourage many people to visit Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge and see what all the excitement is about.”

--Chuck Traxler  
*External Affairs*



Above: Wildflowers in bloom at Glacial Ridge; USFWS Photo;  
Inset: RD Thorson tours Glacial Ridge; Staff Photo;

## *The Sandhill Crane*

“There is a bird in the heart of North America that is perhaps even older than the river, and far more wary than the waterfowl or prairie-chickens. It is as gray as the clouds of winter, as softly beautiful and graceful as the flower heads of Indian grass and big bluestem, and its penetrating bugle-like notes are as distinctive and memorable as the barking of a coyote or the song of a western meadowlark. The bird is the Sandhill crane.”

--Paul A. Johnsgard

# Mille Lacs



The common terns of Hennepin Island will have a pleasant surprise waiting for them when they return to their nesting sites in May. Their summer home has been recarpeted with pea gravel while they were away for the winter.

Members of the Mille Lacs Band, the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Macs Twin Bay Resort and Milton Contracting joined forces to redecorate the south end of the tiny island. On Feb. 28 eight men traveled the two-and-a-half miles across the ice and worked up a sweat in the frigid emptiness of the lake's south end.

Kelly Applegate, wildlife biologist for the Mille Lacs Band, stood with a shovel on the 10-foot crest of the island and directed George Bigbear and his six-wheel ATV mini dumper. "The objective is to get the gravel to the crest of the island," Applegate said as he watched the ATV struggle through the snow up the incline. Snowmelt, waves and wind will eventually move the gravel to the island's perimeter, and the crew was trying to

utilize every shovelful as efficiently as possible.

Jeremy Boyd is a firefighter with the Mille Lacs Band DNR, but he bundled up and grabbed a shovel. "I heard they needed a hand so I came out," he said.

Boyd was joined by Bob Lindstrom, Wendell Leecy, Bigbear, and Chad Milton and Sheldon Milton. Chad Milton said he was a little skeptical about taking his dump trucks out on the ice, but after the first trip he relaxed - a little. "If I had a hole in the top of my Bobcat I'd have brought that out," he said. "But I knew if I went through the ice I'd be trapped in that cage, so I didn't bring it."

Chad plowed a path onto the island on Feb. 23 in preparation, and tore up his truck doing it. "They were going to haul in the gravel from the ice by hand and I knew that just wasn't going to work," he said. "It's funny, I've lived here my whole life and I never knew about the island - that we had a wildlife refuge in our back yard."

Hennepin and Spirit Island make up the smallest national wildlife refuge in the United States. The two islands combined are just over a half acre in size, and the southern third of Hennepin represents the largest of four nesting sites for common terns in Minnesota.

Spirit Island was designated a national wildlife refuge in 1915 by an executive order from President Woodrow Wilson. Hennepin was added to the refuge by a second executive order five years later.

Walt Ford, manager of the Mille Lacs and Rice Lake refuges, said the common tern is not in danger of disappearing nationally, but it is a species of concern in Minnesota. "Their population in the state of Minnesota has plummeted," he said.

Ford plans to conduct a feasibility study in the summer of 2008 exploring options for expanding the nesting site on Hennepin Island. In 2007 the island supported 120 nesting pair, and 127 chicks survived to fledge. That's the highest survival rate recorded since 1993 when monitoring first began.

The main reason there was a high survival rate among the tern chicks last year was the lack of significant storms in the area. "A storm is doomsday for these chicks," Ford said. "You can go from 100 nests to zero over night." He would like to construct a barrier reef in the shallow water around the island.

Ford expressed his appreciation to the Mille Lacs Band for their assistance on Hennepin Island. "Their efforts to ensure these birds have a nesting site in the future is invaluable," he said.

Reprinted from the Mille Lacs Messenger

Left: The crest of the smallest wildlife refuge in the United States was bleak and barren on Feb. 28, but in a couple of months it will be teeming with nesting common terns and their chicks. The dumptruck was one of the smallest in the Milton Brothers fleet, but Chad and Sheldon Milton still had some nervous moments as they lumbered across the ice.





# Out and About

## Troops Invade Columbia NFWCO

Fifteen members of Brownie Troop 695 earned their "Watching Wildlife" badge this month with the help of Columbia NFWCO staff. Patty Herman and Cliff Wilson hosted the event where the girls and their parents learned about native fish and turtles, fishing gear, and boats used to monitor fish populations on the Missouri River. The troop members got to touch and learn about shovelnose sturgeon, channel catfish, a red-eared slider and a false map turtle. Not only were the girls great listeners, but they also asked great questions and had many of their own "fish tales." The troop also got to see the different types of nets we use to catch fish and how each net targets different sized fish. The best part of the evening, however, was the exploration of the boats. Donning child sized life jackets, they clamored up the ladders to investigate the river plate boats. Hands down, their favorite was the Phoenix. Not many 8 year-old girls in the Midwest get an opportunity to climb around in a custom trawl boat with a 375 horsepower motor, big hydraulic winches, color depth finder screens and a sweet horn. One father remarked "...well, if they only remember one thing, they will definitely remember how to honk a boat horn!" To round out the event, the girls had a snack of fish-shaped crackers, gummy worms and water. This event is just a small part of reconnecting children with nature, and the staff of Columbia NFWCO are proud participants. Cooperative participation

with service organizations to provide educational events also helps promote the Service's commitment to maintaining America's natural resources and supports the "Public Use Goal" of the "Fisheries Program Vision for the Future." --Patricia Herman,

*R3-Columbia*



## Clean Vessel Act Grant Program Awards More Than \$700,000 to Five Midwest States

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall announced that more than \$700,000 from the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) grant program will be awarded to five states in the Midwest region in 2008. The grant program awarded a total of more than \$13.6 million to 27 states across the nation. The grants will fund the construction and installation of sewage pumpout facilities, floating restrooms and pumpout boats in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Funding will also create recreational boating education programs across the region.

--Ashley Spratt, External Affairs



Left: Members of Brownie Troop 695 investigate a minifyke net as part of earning a "Watching Wildlife" badge; Patty Herman, describes the shovelnose sturgeon to Brownie Troop 695;

## Environmental Day

at Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge The Royalton Elementary School spent the afternoon at the Refuge as part of their Environmental Learning Day. The third, fourth and fifth graders were involved in a round robin type of program where the students would move from station to station and learn different subjects. There were nine stations, 172 students so the afternoon was quite busy. The refuge, working with our Friends Group has been trying to get more schools and groups out to the Refuge to take advantage of the resource educational and outreach opportunities. The Refuge assisted with the logistics and its facilities. The program started with a barbecue lunch for the students. Twenty-one adults (teachers, PTO staff and volunteers) were present to assist in the program.--Paul Soler; R3-Sherburne NWR



Above: Environmental Day at Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge The Royalton Elementary School spent the afternoon at the Refuge as part of their Environmental Learning

# Let's Go Outside! *The Quick Hike*

In May 1999, I ventured out on a “quick” hike with my wife, Susan and our four-year old daughter, Dylan on a “low-danger” and “novice/intermediate” trail (according to Hawaii Hiker’s Guide) known as the Kalamea. I penned our hiking adventure for Dylan’s posterity.

Following a satisfying lunch of Cheeto’s and peanut butter and honey, I headed out with Dylan in my backpack, along with some juice, candy bars, a few bottles of water and some emergency supplies.

After Dylan sang every Barney and Wiggles song ever written, we came to the junction where we had to go down the side of the mountain. Although this was an “easy” trail, the light rains mixed with the red clay on the hillside to produce a slippery slope--straight down. About halfway down the hill, we met a woman laboring up the side of the hill.

She took a moment to rest and talk to us. I told her we noticed the difficulty she was having with the climb, and let her know that we were concerned about our own trip coming back. The woman informed us that there was a huge shortcut at the end of the trail, just after the waterfall we were attempting to find. Although the book labeled this an obscure trail, she told us they had done work to the trail, and that now it was short and easy.

We followed a rocky, dry streambed to the waterfall. The trail was slippery and the boulders moved under our feet. We crossed back and forth across the stream to find the trail. Dylan pointed out the pink tape ribbon markers.

We reached the waterfall, but the slow going had delayed us, and I was concerned we wouldn’t get back in time. Dusk was fast approaching so I decided to take the shortcut the lady on the hill had told us about.

The trail was not difficult initially. We looked for the junction, where we would take the “easy” trail up the hill to our car. Unfortunately, sheer cliffs towered a thousand feet on both sides of the dry riverbed. There were no obvious exits.

Nightfall neared, but Susan remained calm. We didn’t want to scare Dylan. But as we rounded bend after bend in the river with no way out, the look on Susan’s face told me she was getting

more worried.

With the 70 pound combined weight of my daughter and gear in my pack, we were nearly exhausted. After we stopped for a break, I decided to leave the girls to see if there was an exit near.

I crashed over boulder after boulder and wobbly rock and dense underbrush. I surveyed the scene around me--only to see more endless miles of sheer cliffs...and no way out. I high-tailed it back to where the girls were eating. Susan saw my wide eyes and realized we needed to go back the way we came.

We loaded back up and started back down the trail. Dylan was still singing and in great spirits, despite two pretty good falls. In the open, daylight typically fades, but thousands of feet into a valley, darkness crashes down like a velvet curtain. I took out our only flashlight...a little double-A mag-flashlight, and Susan followed closely behind.

We eventually heard the patter of the small waterfall. It was the point where we started on the “shortcut” we’d been advised of. Unfortunately, even with the small flashlight, the trail was precarious on the slippery rocks, and the pink ribbons were easy to miss.

We made it another half-hour, before the dark became impenetrable. Susan and I suffered a piercing combination of exhaustion, dehydration and hunger. I knew that even if we could stumble through the darkness for the remaining mile, and even if we found the tape marking the junction to the hill, we wouldn’t be able to climb the sharp hill in the dark. I looked Susan in the eyes, and we knew that we would be spending the night in the jungle.

Years of Army training had prepared me to spend time in the woods, but I certainly didn’t want Dylan or Susan to have to be uncomfortable or in any

danger.

The spot we made camp on wasn’t the most palatial, but we couldn’t see well enough to choose a better location. When I told Dylan we would be “camping” for the evening...she said, “Oh, goody... Daddy, I’m so excited!!”

I made a fire with some damp wood. I ripped the pages from the hiking guide, and flicked the Zippo lighter...but nothing happened. Fortunately, I had matches in the survival kit, and after several attempts, the paper was burning. Eventually, we had a roaring little fire going in a stone ring. Both Susan and I had a boost in morale, as the fire gave us smoke to keep away mosquitoes, flames to keep away wild pigs, warmth, and maybe a signal if any helicopters flew over. Dylan was still very happy to be there, and wondered if we remembered to bring marshmallows for the fire.

I made a bed from some towels for Dylan and Susan. The rocky soil made it hard to get comfortable, but Dylan laid on Susan, and I covered both of them with the tinfoil blanket.

With 10 hours to kill and Dylan sound asleep, we talked about how worried people would be, and what they might think.

I had to stay awake all night to keep the fire going. At one point, Susan asked me if “that was my stomach growling?” I told her it was--however I knew that it was a wild pig foraging in the jungle not too far away. I stoked the fire as high as I could, and kept a big stick handy. Fortunately, the fire kept any curious jungle visitors away.

At 2 a.m. I felt a slight mist. I prayed that it wouldn’t rain...worried about our safety from flash floods, as well as the absolute discomfort of being cold and wet. I found four small trees growing in a square. I took one branch from each tree and bent it to the next tree, and lashed them together with vines. I made a rudimentary ceiling with banana and taro leaves to make a rain-resistant “house”. Between the fire and the hut, my girls looked at me like I was King of the Jungle (if you ignore why we were out there in the first place). The mist stopped. Miraculously, we had a pretty dry evening.

**Continued on next page.**



# Connecting People with Nature

Below: Ashley Spratt and CFO Project Leader, Charlie Scott at Earth Day 2008 (Columbia);



Ashley Spratt has been connecting kids with nature with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife program entitled “SEEDS- Students, the Environment, and Endangered Species.” Launched at the Missouri Ecological Services Field Office, the program promotes environmental awareness among students by engaging them in tangible outdoor activities. Spratt served as a co-lead for the highly lauded program.

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, Spratt moved to Missouri when she was twelve. “I’ve always wanted to work in communications for an environmental conservation organization,” she says. She says because she’s from South Africa she’s always been in love with wildlife. “Africa is the epitome of natural wonder – it is the reason I’m a nature-lover for life,” she says.

Spratt joined the service in November 2006 at Missouri ES in Columbia with the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and later migrated into the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). She received her bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Missouri in 2007 and will receive her master’s degree in journalism from Mizzou in August 2008.

While she originates from the south, Spratt continues to be northward bound, as she recently accepted an offer by External Affairs Assistant Regional Director, Jason Holm to be the new outreach coordinator for Fisheries, Migratory Birds and State Programs. Spratt will continue her impressive efforts to connect children with nature in her new position.

--Valerie Rose Redmond,  
*External Affairs*

Below: Students in the SEEDS program pose for a photo (Columbia); Staff photo;



## Women in the Outdoors

The 3rd annual Women in the Outdoors skill workshop was held at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. A total of 68 women of all ages signed up with 61 actually participating. Some of the 29 classes that were offered included birding techniques, dutch oven cooking, wildlife photography, archery, fly casting and loess hill ecology to name a few. As part of the event, those attending were asked to bring items they could donate for the Mound City Library (the library was one of the sponsors of the event). A total of 244 items were received including audio books, DVD’s, VHS’s, paperback and hardback books. Women came from Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska and Kansas. Some of the same women attend each year and interest continues to grow in this event that provides women an opportunity to learn and to participate in outdoor activities in a non-competitive atmosphere. --Ron Bell, *R3-Squaw Creek NWR*

*The Quick Hike continued from previous page.*

Around 6 a.m, the jungle woke up and we broke camp. We packed up and took one last look at our home for the past several hours. Although we didn’t want to be there any more, I felt a sort of fondness for that place that sheltered and protected us during the evening. I loaded Dylan onto my back and we started on our way.

About a half-mile further, we found the junction of the hillside. We drank the last of our water and limped up the mountain, down the trail, and out into the nearest housing area. I’m sure we were a sight to behold...sooty, dirty, drenched with sweat, and limping...with a happy, chirping 4-year-old in the backpack. We found a rather-stunned woman who let us use her phone and gave us some juice.

We had made it. Our quick hike had lasted over 18 hours. We were sore, out of food and water, but thankfully we were unharmed (except for a few mosquito bites). Susan and Dylan looked at me like I was hero. It was a while before we ventured out again, but the next time, well... I took my cell. --Jason Holm,  
*External Affairs*

# Best of the Best



## Yi Li of Ann Arbor Wins Michigan's Junior Duck Stamp Best of Show

Yi Li is Michigan's Best of Show winner in the Junior Duck Stamp contest held on March 27, 2008, at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, part of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, in Saginaw. Her piece entitled "Where the Sky and Water Meet," was done in colored pencil and acrylic and featured



a pair of Red-breasted mergansers. Li is the daughter of Zhong and Julee Li of Ann Arbor. She is a junior at Huron High School in Ann Arbor. Li has been drawing since about age 9 and received a third place award in last year's Junior Duck Stamp contest. Li's artwork went against the rest of the country's Best of Shows in the national competition held at the San Diego Zoo in California on April 17. Seokkyun Hong of Texas won first place in the national competition. Her artwork will be made into the Federal Junior Duck Stamp for 2008-2009.

Three hundred and twenty-one students in grades K-12 entered Michigan's contest this year. Entries came from all parts of the state and included students from public schools, private schools, art schools, and home schools. Russ Terry of Ducks Unlimited, one of the five judges who selected winning artwork said, "Ducks Unlimited is proud to be a partner again in this year's Junior Duck Stamp

Contest. It is so important to foster an appreciation for habitat conservation in our youth, and the Junior Duck Stamp Program is a great way to do it. Plus, the proceeds from the sale of the stamp support conservation education."

On April 26, 2008, an awards ceremony was held for all first through third place winners at Green Point Environmental Learning Center. Sixteen of the winners attended, along with their families and teachers. Altogether 70 people enjoyed viewing the winners artwork and eating cake afterwards. Each winner received a refuge backpack, personalized magnet of their artwork, duck call, drawing paper, colored pencils, 2007-2008 Junior Duck Stamp, ribbon, and a plaque. Five teachers were honored for their exceptional efforts in this year's contest. They were Lois Ege of Grand Rapids, Lisa Gabriel of Birch Run, Anne Keller of Ada, Karlene King of Sturgis and Shawna Richardson of Ishpeming. Each teacher received an \$80 gift certificate to purchase art supplies from Dick Blick.

*B*ecky Goche, R3-Shiawassee NWR

## Birding Tour

The Morrison County Birding Club, along with the Friends of Crane Meadows and the Refuge hosted a morning birding tour at Crane Meadows NWR on May 4, 2008. It turned out to be a beautiful day. Twenty-four people joined in the event; hiking and viewing sights along the Platte River Trail. A lunch, sponsored by the Friends of Crane Meadows was served on their return held at the shop.

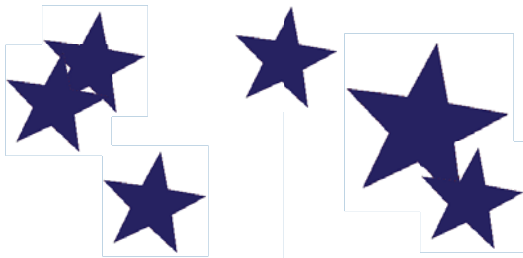
--Paul Soler, R3-Sherburne NWR



Above: Numerous birds and wildlife were spotted on the birding tour. Some posing for photos. photo by Paul A. Given;



Above: Birding tour visitors making their way along the Platte River Trail, Crane Meadows NWR enjoying the sights of spring. photo by Paul A. Given on Trail near Rice Lake; Crane Meadows NWR; Staff photos;



# Around the Region

## Celebrating Excellence

**Below: Boys Town Spring Clean-Up at DeSoto, George Oliver USFWS employee. Staff Photo**



**Below: Lead Technician, Patty Herman, describes characteristics of shovelnose sturgeon to interested onlookers from Brownie Troop 695; R3-Columbia FRO;**



### What's Going On?

The Winona District and Headquarters staff of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge provided a day of exploration for young people from the Project FINE (Focus on Integrating Newcomers through Education) organization. This organization helps newcomers integrate into their community and Upper Miss Refuge staff wanted to provide opportunities to learn more about a refuge and what it offers these new residents to the community. Left: Brian Pember, Bio Tech, looks on as a youngster show what he discovered. Staff photo.



## Got Duck Stamps?



## Quote of the Month

There is no single face in nature,  
because every eye that looks upon it, sees it from its own angle.  
So every man's spice-box seasons his own food. - *Zora Neale Hurston*



## Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management



Above: Jordan River NFH Fisheries Biologist Wayne Talo assisted students with the fish dissection; -USFWS photo

Below: Mrs. Ernst with her "pre kindergarten" class that also made the trip to Jordan River NFH; -USFWS photo



### Jordan River NFH Biologist Selected to Assist in Development of NCTC Course

Fisheries Biologist Tim Smigielski was invited to attend the Schoolyard Habitat course held in Folsom, California from April 28 to May 2, 2008. Tim has been dedicated to developing public outreach and public use opportunities at Jordan River NFH and with in Region 3 since he came to us in 2003. This course has been created to provide training in partnering with schools in order to develop projects where schoolyards are transformed into natural habitats useful for learning and outdoor play. The premise is that by transforming the black top, fences and out of bounds areas into usable and aesthetically pleasing natural habitat, children will be able to connect with nature frequently and the Service can fulfill the goal of rehabilitating natural habitats.



Above: Tim Smigielski coordinates the public outreach and public use programs for Jordan River NFH; -USFWS photo

Below: Yearling lake trout from Jordan River NFH reach their final destination in Lake Huron; -USFWS photo



We are pleased to announce that the Fish and Wildlife Journal (aka. ARS) <http://ars.fws.gov> is once again fully functional, and ready to accept your journal reports AND photographs.

Errors that surfaced a couple of months ago after the Service switched to a new server for Intranet applications have all been resolved. Journal users should no longer experience multiple login windows, and you should be able to upload photographs with your reports.

Your patience with this process is very much appreciated. Thank You and please start entering your reports and photos again.