



# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Inside Region 3

## *June 2007*



### ***Inside This Issue:***

***Bald Eagles Removed from Endangered Species List***  
***Cypress Creek Refuge Adds Important Tract***  
***"Leave No Child Inside" Campaign***

### **About the Cover:**

Mitch Weegman, Joe Huck and Brian Pember (left to right) study a location map during a heron rookery survey on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in early June.

*-USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler*



## Bald Eagle Soars off Endangered Species List

After nearly disappearing from most of the United States decades ago, the bald eagle is now flourishing across the nation and no longer needs the protection of the Endangered Species Act. At

places they haven't been for decades. We enjoy the largest eagle population since World War II and I'm proud to help the eagle take this historic flight in its remarkable journey to recovery."

In the Midwest, eagle numbers are among the highest in the continental United States, with Minnesota leading the lower 48 states with 1,312 breeding pairs. Wisconsin's population is the nation's third largest outside Alaska, with 1,065 pairs.

"Here in the Midwest, where eagles have rebounded so well, we commend the cooperative spirit that brought the nation's symbol back to the Great Lakes and rivers of our region," said Midwest Regional Director Robyn Thorson. "And we point with pride to one of the Fish and Wildlife Service's own - Rachel Carson - whose courage and determination in calling attention to the dangers of DDT made the eagle's recovery possible. What a fitting way to celebrate what would be her 100th birthday this year."

Kempthorne emphasized the ongoing commitment of the Interior Department and the entire federal government to the eagle's continued success, noting that bald eagles will continue to be protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Both federal laws prohibit "taking" - killing, selling or otherwise harming eagles, their nests or eggs.

Earlier this month, the Service clarified its regulations implementing the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and published a set of National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. These measures are

designed to give landowners and others clear guidance on how to ensure that actions they take on their property are consistent with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In addition, the Service is accepting public comments on a proposal to establish a permit program under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act that would allow a limited take of bald and golden eagles.

The removal of the bald eagle from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants will become effective 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. Upon delisting, the Service will continue to work with state wildlife agencies to monitor eagles for at least five years. If at any time it appears that the bald eagle again needs the Act's protection, the Service can propose to relist the species. The Service has developed a draft monitoring plan that is available for public review and comment.

"It's fitting that our national symbol has also become a symbol of the great things that happen through cooperative conservation," said Service Director H. Dale Hall. "Eagles could not have recovered without a support network of strong partnerships among government at all levels, tribes, conservation organizations, the business community and individual citizens."

Concurrently with the announcement, the Service is making the draft post-delisting monitoring plan available and is soliciting comment.

More information about the bald eagle and the post-delisting monitoring plan is available on the Service's bald eagle website at: <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/baldeagle.htm>

a ceremony held June 28, at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne certified the eagle's amazing recovery by announcing the nation's symbol will be removed from the list of threatened and endangered species.

"The bald eagle's recovery is perhaps the greatest conservation success story ever told - a story painstakingly written by passionate and dedicated people across the nation who worked together for decades to bring these magnificent birds back to healthy populations," said Secretary Kempthorne. "Today, eagles thrive in



## Conservation Partnership Leads to Land Addition at Cypress Creek Refuge

The American Land Conservancy, Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, Shawnee RC&D, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently celebrated the donation of the 251 acre Ice Grain tract to Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The Ice Grain tract connects the internationally significant Cache River Wetlands to the Mississippi River, creating a 30-mile continuous forested corridor along the banks of the Cache River.

American Land Conservancy (ALC), a national non-profit land conservation organization, obtained an option to purchase the tract in January 2006. Grant funding of \$400,860 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation

canoe trip, interpretive hike, catered lunch and partner appreciation recognition. More than 60 people representing local landowners, refuge volunteers, state and federal elected officials and partner organizations gathered for the day's festivities.

Refuge Manager Dennis Sharp and Refuge Biologist Karen Arnold led a canoe trip on the Old Cache Channel which includes approximately six miles of channel abandoned by a diversion ditch into the Mississippi River. Participants paddled this meandering channel with its majestic old growth cypress trees and learned about the areas natural and cultural history. The canoe trip took place in the general area where John James

changes that have occurred to the Cache River. While standing on the bank of the Mississippi River the group was taken back to the early 1800's by a "Choctaw hunter" (portrayed by Cypress Creek NWR Maintenance Worker Dave Prosser) who supplied the Lewis and Clark Expedition with wild game during their travels. This time traveler explained how the expedition had spent the night of November 20, 1803 at this spot; and the extreme difficulties they had paddling against the current of the mighty Mississippi. He noted the expedition stopped five times between the confluence and Cape Girardeau due to the strong cur-



enabled ALC to acquire the tract in December 2006 and donate it to Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge in early 2007. Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development played an important role as the local partner and fiscal agent managing the grant for ALC.

ALC and other partners publicized the donation at an open house event recently held at the Cache Levee Access on Cypress Creek NWR. Activities included a guided

Audubon spent the winter of 1810 camped with a local tribe of the Shawnee and described some of his first encounters with Carolina parakeets, passenger pigeons and ivory-billed woodpeckers.

Other event participants were treated to an interpretive hike led by Assistant Refuge Manager Liz Jones. Hikers followed the Cache River Diversion channel out to the Mississippi River, where they learned about the hydrological

rent. This section of river is known to have the steepest fall on the Mississippi making it difficult, even today, for barge traffic to navigate both up or down stream. *Liz Jones, Cypress Creek NWR*

**- USFWS background photo  
Refuge Manager Dennis Sharp (far right) pauses to talk with refuge partners during a canoe tour along the newly acquired refuge land.**



## Midwest Region Key Partners in Controlling Minnesota Wildfire

The Ham Lake fire in northeastern Minnesota's Superior National Forest was already raging out of control when Steve Jakala, the Regional Fire Management Coordinator, received a call from the U. S. Forest Service requesting assistance. Bad burning conditions, including, high winds, dry conditions and a large amount of timber in the area from the 1999 blow-down, fueled the volatile fire, and made it virtually impossible to control. When the fire, under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, exceeded the capability of the agency, they requested help from their partners: the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Minnesota DNR, and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"We heard about it the afternoon that it started. [We] knew right away it would be big because of the winds," Jakala recalls. "That time of year, they were in an extreme drought and high winds pushed the fire making it humanly impossible to stop. When fires get going, water bodies (lakes) are no barrier to fire spreads."

The first thing Jakala did when he got the call was to activate the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Dispatch System. He and Regional Fire Ecologist Tim Hepola called for available fire fighting resources in Minnesota and throughout the region. They immediately shut down the prescribed burn program and quickly dispatched engines, fire fighters, and overhead person-

nel to the area to assist in fire control, while at the same time, ensuring resource availability for any wildfires that might erupt elsewhere in the Region.

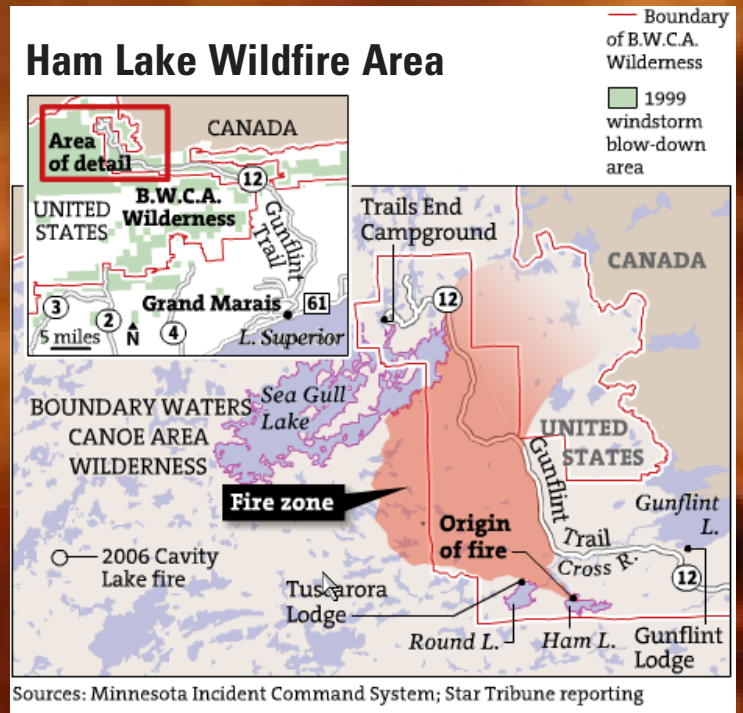
Both Jakala and Hepola agree that there was no negative impact on the fish and wildlife in the area. "They have a tendency to

get out of the way of fires...into safe areas," Jakala noted.

Fire experts agree that fire is a natural part of foresting and can be beneficial and life giving. "It's a process that needs to occur. It rejuvenates the eco-system," says Hepola.

One hundred and twenty-five miles north of Duluth, the coniferous Superior Lake Forest along the Gunflint Trail in Grand Marais, Minn., is a popular tourist destination.

Gene Shaw, public relations director at Visit Duluth, said that the "trees and vegetation are already coming back in places." He also notes that the area burned can be compared to "a quarter on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper." Joe McDonough, manager at the Best Western hotel in Grand Marais and loon conversationalist, says he hiked in the burn area and has not seen any carcasses, but has seen fox, deer and other live animals.



The loss of property is unfortunate, whenever it happens. Sometimes people allow trees to grow right near their homes. Hepola notes that it is important for people to "leave a safety zone, a defensible space for fire fighting." Prescribed fires also prevent property damage by reducing the wood and vegetation on the ground.

The sweeping Ham Lake fire was human-caused by a campfire. "We try to keep the public informed of potential wildfires, with notifications, bill boards, postings and news releases," says Jakala. But in this case, "we were able to respond quickly to meet the needs not only of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but also our cooperators. We responded quickly to help our Forest Service neighbors." Hepola added, "We supported and met the call very well." *Valerie Rose Redmond, ABA*

- Background photo of Ham Lake Wildfire courtesy U.S. Forest Service.

## McGregor District Staff Help Recover Grounded Eaglets

On June 2, strong winds blew down one of the 99 active bald eagle nests located on the McGregor District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. While this occurrence is not rare on the refuge, what followed was.

Jim and Karen Teaser, residents of McGregor, Iowa, spotted the downed nest and notified the Iowa DNR and staff at the McGregor District Office. The Teasers reported that the eagle nest on Cat Fish Slough had fallen down and several chicks were in the water. Assistant District Manager Clyde Male assembled a refuge response team and mobilized after normal business hours to the fallen nest report.

The initial inspection of the eaglets revealed that the birds had survived the fall, but their further survival looked dim. The two chicks had developed full feather coverage on their bodies, but lacked the fully developed feathers

needed to protect them from the elements. The nesting material that the birds clung to was partially wet and floating in the water. While the water undoubtedly cushioned their fall and allowed them to escape injury from their wild ride some 50 feet above, continued exposure to cold water would eventually have caused their death if left unattended.

Despite lacking parental nest building skills, the refuge crew built a new nest from 2 x 4s, wire mesh, and available sticks and grass. "It was not pretty," Refuge employee Seth Kettler admitted later, "but it worked." The newly constructed nest was located within feet of the old nest tree but much lower in the forest canopy. In addition to the nest an opening had to be created around the new nest to allow easy access by the adults tending the eaglets. Kettler reported that when he revisited the artificial nest the following day, "all appeared normal, both chicks were visible and erect in the new nest bowl, with one adult next to the tree keeping a watchful eye on my passing."

Adult eagles have few natural enemies, and healthy birds are rarely the subject of predation. Eaglets, however, depending on their state of development, are susceptible to a host of predators. Within the refuge great horned owls and raccoons have been known to rob the nests of young eaglets. Once on the ground, terrestrial predators such as fox or coyotes may kill the young.

With this particular nest, the two eaglets were developed enough to fend off smaller predators by day, but without the aid of adult birds



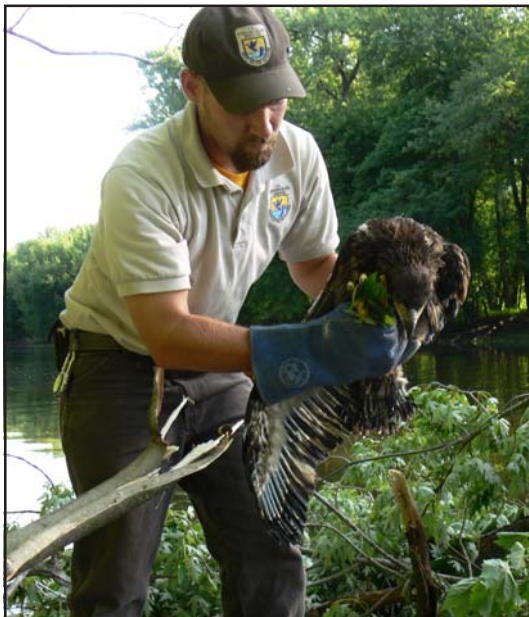
An eaglet sits comfortably in its new nest.

within the confinement of the nest, larger predators would eventually have made a meal of the two.

Bald eagles typically use the same nest or an alternative nest year after year. Each season these nests have additional material added to them during courtship rituals and general home maintenance. Neil Henkenius, a biological technician at the McGregor District and the individual responsible for eagle surveys within Pool 10, indicated the Cat Fish Slough nest was three years old. Henkenius went on to say that eagle nests weighing as much as 2,200 pounds have been reported. "It's a wonder more nests don't tumble from their nest trees, it's like parking a small car in the top of a tree during a wind storm."

Male indicated that the decision to "reconstruct" the nest was based on observations of continued parental care of the chicks and their overall apparent good health. The only other option would have been to remove the chicks from the wild.

"The Teasers did the right thing by contacting officials with the refuge," said Male. "Because of the Teasers, today we have the potential to add two more wild eagles to the refuge's eagle population." *Clyde Male, Upper Miss. NWR - McGregor Dist.*



- USFWS photos

McGregor District staff member Seth Kettler helps relocate an eaglet from its destroyed nest to the new one refuge staff constructed.



## Wisconsin Men Convicted for Illegal Alaskan Brown Bear Hunting

Two men from southeastern Wisconsin pleaded guilty to federal charges in U.S. District Court, Milwaukee, Wis., in a case involving illegal brown bear hunting and illegal guiding in Alaska. The men, Gerald T. Thull, 52, West Bend, and Thomas J. Bahr, 44, Random Lake, pleaded guilty on May 30.

U.S. Magistrate Judge William E. Callahan, Jr., sentenced Thull to pay a fine of \$15,000 and ordered Bahr to pay a fine of \$5,000. Judge Callahan ordered both men to pay restitution to the state of Alaska in the total amount of \$2,600. Rifles used in the illegal hunts, two full-mounted brown bears and a bear skull were forfeited as part of the guilty pleas.

Thull and Bahr admitted to conspiring with Alaska hunting guide Bradley J. Salsaa to violate the federal Lacey Act. In October 1999, Thull and Bahr hunted brown bears illegally in Alaska, even though both men had killed brown bears in the same Game Management Unit the previous year.

Alaska state law prohibited Thull and Bahr from bear hunting in the same Unit two years in a row. A third man, Gilbert J. Beine, 52, Campbellsport, Wis., allowed Thull to use his tag on the bear Thull illegally shot. Beine has also been charged in federal court, and will appear at a later date.

Thull and Bahr pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act by transporting, receiving and acquiring the illegally killed bears in interstate commerce, from Alaska to Wisconsin. Thull pleaded guilty to an additional charge of purchasing guiding services for the illegal brown bear hunts.

Bahr told the Judge that the bears he and Thull shot in 1998 weren't large enough. He said he and Thull wanted to go back to Alaska the next year to kill larger bears. Judge Callahan noted Thull's behavior suggested disregard and arrogance toward game laws. Said Judge Callahan, "hunting trips to Alaska are a gift, and you've abused that gift." *Ed Spoon, Madison LE Office*



- USFWS photo by Ed Spoon

Two Alaskan brown bear mounts seized as part of the investigation.

## Minnesota Second-Graders Learn Skills to Become Budding Botanists

In these times of computer games, it is difficult to get children to embrace science and nature. Yet, 48 second-graders from Frost Lake School in St. Paul, Minn., happily participated in experiments and activities that introduced them to plant science.

Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office staff biologists Laurie Fairchild and Annette Trowbridge teamed with two Frost Lake teachers through an opportunity provided by the St. Paul Public School's Common X-Change program. Over the course of four classroom science lessons, the

teachers and TCFO biologists planned, taught and discussed four classroom science lessons ranging from plant adaptation characteristics to photosynthesis. Students conducted experiments demonstrating the ability of soils to retain water, life cycles of plants, how plants grow and change, and characteristics of plants that help them survive in various environments.

In addition, students measured, weighed, and recorded the life of their plants using the data to answer questions about their plants. *Annette Trowbridge, Twin Cities ES Field Office.*



- USFWS photo

Twin Cities Field Office Biologist Laurie Fairchild assists a second-grade student with her experiment notebook.



## Chicago Wilderness Launches “Leave No Child Inside”

More than 200 Chicago Wilderness member organizations, including the Midwest Region’s Chicago ES field office, are forging a connection between children and nature with programs like camping trips, nature scavenger hunts and birding hikes. Beginning next year, Chicago Wilderness members will begin offering all-new programs as part of *Leave No Child Inside*, the consortium’s new effort to get kids outdoors.

The *Leave No Child Inside* program kicked off June 16 at Chicago’s Jackson Park, as officials from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, BP America and the U.S. Forest Service helped Chicago Wilderness launch its effort to encourage youth to explore the outdoors.

“Our nation has a great heritage of outdoor activity and stewardship,” said Robyn Thorson, Midwest Regional Director. “Because we treasure the link between people and nature we’ve added *Leave No Child Inside* and similar initiatives to our agency’s national priorities.”

*Leave No Child Inside* offers hundreds of year-round events in nature accessible to millions of children throughout the region, and a Chicago Wilderness Field Book to encourage fun and educational visits to local natural areas.

The *Leave No Child Inside* website <http://www.kidsoutside.info> offers a wealth of information on how to connect kids and nature through Chicago Wilderness pro-

grams, lands and activities. The program’s ultimate goal is fostering generations of children who care enough about nature to protect it.

Chicago Wilderness is a partnership of more than 200 public and private organizations working together to protect the Chicago region’s natural spaces, help conserve the diversity of plants and animals, and enrich local residents’ quality of life. The partnership forms a natural network spanning more than 300,000 acres of forests, prairies, savannas, wetlands, lakes and other protected open spaces, in southeastern Wisconsin, northeastern Illinois, northwestern Indiana, and southwestern Michigan. *Georgia Parham, External Affairs*

## Recreating a Trout Stream

On a hot day in June more than 60 people gathered at the Bass Ponds area of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to see something that hadn’t been seen in the area in more than 50 years. The people were there to help stock 1,450 brook trout fingerlings into a cold, groundwater-fed stream that last supported native brook trout in the 1940s and 50s.

The project to return trout to the stream began several years ago when Minnesota Valley Refuge Biologist Vicki Sherry and Fishery Biologist Scott Yess of the La Crosse Fishery Resource Office were conducting fishery surveys on the refuge. Sherry knew the stream had historically supported trout and after surveying the stream, Yess thought it might still be able to support a trout population. Sherry then began assembling an army of partners that in-

cluded the Minnesota DNR, Trout Unlimited, the Izaak Walton, a local school and a nearby business.

Over the next two years, Sherry began having the partners help with small restoration projects along the stream and asked other trout experts to survey the stream. The experts all agreed that the stream,

located less than one mile from the Mall of America and surrounded by a metropolitan population of more than two million people, could once again support native brook trout.

On June 15, brook trout once again swam freely in the stream. The stream will likely be stocked again over the next several years and the population’s success will be monitored. It is hoped that this stream will support a self-sustaining population of brook trout. *Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

Refuge Biologist Vicki Sherry stocks trout into a stream on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.



## Discovery of Rare Bird Nest is Cause for Celebration

Scientists and bird lovers are celebrating a milestone in the recovery of a highly endangered songbird as an active Kirtland's warbler nest was discovered on private property in Wisconsin, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced on June 14. Subsequently, several more nests were discovered in the same area.

The tiny Kirtland's warbler, whose distinctive mating call can be heard up to a quarter of a mile away, lives primarily in jack pine forests in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. However, the species has been seen in recent years in other areas, including Wisconsin, Ontario and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The nest was discovered by a birder who found the first Kirtland's warblers in the area several weeks ago. Recognizing the significance of the discovery, this private citizen came forward and has been assisting the Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in documenting the presence of Kirtland's warblers in the state.

"This development is a testament to decades of cooperative conserva-

tion among the states of Michigan and Wisconsin, private landowners, and organizations such as the Audubon Society," said Robyn Thorson, regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Region. "This discovery proves that by working together, recovery and range expansion for an endangered bird are not only possible, but are happening as we speak."

The nest was discovered on land in central Wisconsin owned by the Plum Creek Timber Company.

The Kirtland's warbler population plummeted from 432 singing males in 1951 to only 201 males in 1971. Thanks to recovery efforts by federal, state and private partners, Kirtland's warbler numbers have increased steadily since 1990, reaching 1,486 males in 2006, the highest number on record since population monitoring began.

Prior to this year's historic nesting in Wisconsin, no Kirtland's warblers have nested outside Michigan since nesting occurred in Ontario in the 1940s. In the past two years, several singing males have been found at a single location in Wisconsin, prompting specula-



- Photo by Richard Baetson  
Kirtland's warbler

tion and optimism that the species would ultimately be found nesting in the state.

Successful cooperative management efforts have restored the Kirtland's warbler throughout much of its historic nesting range in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The presence of a healthy and expanding core population in this area has resulted in the dispersal and appearance of the birds in the Upper Peninsula, Canada and Wisconsin. *Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs*

## Ohio Students Learn About Wetlands and Water Molecules at Summer Camp



- USFWS photo

Private Land Biologist Kristin Westad discusses wood duck habitat with students at a two-day summer camp.

Ohio Private Lands Biologist Kristin Westad used outdoor games during a two-day summer camp to help southern Ohio youngsters understand the global water cycle and to imagine the lives of ducks migrating between wetlands.

Westad was one of many biologists to share their time and knowledge with the kids. at the camp hosted by the Meigs County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The positive impact of this camp is the result of significant negative impacts that occurred in 1993. A

catastrophic flood event at a Southern Ohio Coal Company mine caused untreated and partially treated mine water to be dumped into Leading Creek for 28 days.

A settlement with the company led to the development of the Leading Creek Improvement Plan. The Leading Creek Watershed Summer Camp is part of the improvement plan and helps develop local interest in enhancing the natural qualities of Leading Creek, and fosters a sense of land stewardship among the kids. *Kristin Westad, Ohio PLO*



## Around the Region



- USFWS photo Linda Roberts

Staff and visitors at Rice Lake NWR build bird houses during a Family Fun Day held at the Refuge on June 8.



- USFWS photo by Jon Krapfl

Staff at Horicon NWR test out their new "Swamp Devil." The machine shreds unwanted aquatic vegetation.



- USFWS photo by Les Peterson

Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association Executive Director Mark Johnson, Federal Duck Stamp Artist Joe Hautman and Refuge Supervisor Jim Leach at the dedication of the Buchl WPA.



- USFWS photo

La Crosse FRO Biologist Heidi Keuler shows a mudminnow to a group of boy scouts during a demonstration at boy scout camp.



- USFWS photo

Rock Island Field Office Biologist Craig McPeck talks about stream minnows during a recent BioBlitz in Winnebago County, Ill.



- USFWS photo by Becky Rassmussen  
Union Slough NWR Biologist Tom Skilling checks a tree swallow box on the refuge as part of a study looking at the effects of heavy metals on migratory birds.



- USFWS photo

Columbia FRO Biologist Colby Wrasse shows a shovelnose sturgeon to fourth grade students during "Aquatic Day" in Hallsville, Mo.



## Dashboard Confessional

Staff from the Regional External Affairs Office are occasionally allowed to leave their desks and actually go out and see the people, places and things we help to promote. While traveling around the Midwest Region, you can't help but notice the quality professionals we have working for the Service. In each destination, there is a unique story. We'll try to share as many of these stories with you as we can. This is one of them.

**Nancy Gilbertson** is the refuge manager of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City, Iowa. Nancy has spent her entire Service career in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Originally from North Dakota, she began her Service career as a co-op student at Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico working with big horn sheep. She then moved to Lower Rio Grande NWR in Texas, then to Red Rock Lakes NWR in Montana, on to Buenos Aires NWR in Arizona, then to Bill Williams River NWR in Arizona and from there to her current position at Neal Smith.

Public Affairs Specialist Chuck Traxler had the pleasure of spending a little time with Nancy out on the prairie recently and asked her a few questions.

EA: Of all those refuges you've worked at, is one the best?

NG: O' gosh, no. They are all the best. Every refuge person I've ever talk with has said, every refuge they've been to has been the most beautiful place for one reason or another. There is something so special about every refuge.

EA: What is the main focus of your efforts here at Neal Smith?

NG: Our main goals here are to restore native tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitats and to provide environmental education to help the public understand and appreciate these habitats and the plants and animals that call them home.

EA: Is there any native prairie left here at Neal Smith?

NG: A very few small, scattered remnants of native prairie remain, around 100 acres. The vast majority of our work here is restoring the tallgrass prairie that once stretch from horizon to horizon.

EA: I understand you worked with Nita Fuller at a couple refuges?

NG: When I was at Bosque del Apache she was the assistant manager and when I was at Lower Rio Grande she was the refuge manager.

EA: So, do you have any good stories about her you could tell me that might help enhance my career?

NG: (laughs) Something you can use, huh? Well, nothing I'm willing to share. Actually she has always been terrific to work for. She is highly respected, and deservedly so, throughout the entire Refuge System and the Service.

EA: What do you think is the best thing Neal Smith NWR has to offer?

NG: I think our visitor services program and our visitor center here is one of the best in the nation. I love the refuge movie, you've got to see the movie. Even though it's 10 years old, it's still visually impressive and the messages are still relevant.

The other neat thing is just being able to come out here and stand in the prairie. To get a small sense of what it was like 150 years ago. Especially in the fall when the grass is eight or 10 feet tall and you imag-



- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler  
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge  
Manager Nancy Gilbertson out on the prairie.

ine the pioneers standing in this grass not knowing which direction they are going. You begin to understand that the stories of settlers losing their children in the grass could really happen. I think it leaves you with a sense of awe, when you realize all the bounty this land provided and all the challenges these people faced.

EA: So, I have to ask, which is it, bison or buffalo?

NG: Bison.

EA: OK, so how come all your signs say buffalo?

NG: This interview is over. No, just kidding. We are in the process of changing that. I think when the refuge initially brought in the bison the thought was we'll call them buffalo so the majority of people know what we are talking about. We've been educating people about bison ever since. I think bison is now pretty well accepted and understood by most people, so we'll change the signs as we can.



## Inside Region 3



<http://midwest.fws.gov>

**June 2007**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Midwest Region  
Office of External Affairs  
1 Federal Drive  
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111**

**612/713-5360**

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Federal Relay Number: 1 800/877-8339  
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