



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

February 2008

*C*ourting the Land

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Minnesota Valley***

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Dollars***

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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 your personal nature encounters, as well as innovative ideas on how to connect with nature. We will run your accounts in this feature segment. E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov.

On the cover:

A day at the office for Upper Mississippi River Refuge Biologist Lisa Reid finds her out in the Weaver Bottoms sampling aquatic vegetation prior to a summer drawdown. See page 8.

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Science Time

February may seem cold and quiet but it is always a busy month for the Fish and Wildlife Service. At the Washington level, the President's Budget is delivered to Congress the first week of the month, keeping the Director busy with a series of hearings about our funding, our operations and our issues. In addition to supporting those national efforts, in the Midwest Region we are busy in February with the receipt and distribution of our annual funding, and we traditionally use the heart of winter for key meetings and priority topics. What's at the forefront of many February discussions and assignments? Science!

It's no surprise to hear that science is the heart of the mission of the Service, but we often face operational and business demands that can appear to overtake the priority of science in our daily or monthly agenda. But current hearings, topics and assignments clearly emphasize the enduring and essential role of science in our work.

Take, example, the agenda for winter meetings here in the Midwest. Last month many Midwest Region employees across programs gathered in LaCrosse to help us understand and apply the principles of Strategic Habitat Conservation in our work. Another group of Ecological Services employees met near Chicago to focus on coordinating their science delivery and be at the front of emerging science issues. And just this week the Refuge Biologists Workshop in Moline focused for three days on restoration ecology and other essential aspects of their science work.

I remarked on this in my opening address to the biologists assembled in Moline. Support for these kinds of meetings is a first indicator of the importance of our cadre of science

professionals. In addition, the dominant topics on the national Service agenda further reflect our science emphasis. These include advancing both understanding and application in areas like Adaptive Management, the discipline of structured decisions, a new Scientific Code of Professional Responsibility, Strategic Habitat Conservation, and (perhaps the most looming science challenge) climate change. These are the dominant agenda items for the Service, and they are science issues.

This focus on science includes our financial and business priorities. In terms of the budget formulation season, we devoted many resources in the past two months to addressing budget initiatives associated with climate change. Ranging from monitoring to research initiatives, we are forecasting the roles and challenges we will face on this essential science issue in order to financially position ourselves to be ready and equipped to deal with them. As we predict and position for future funding, science dealing with climate change is a leading focus.

High level decisions and positions advocate our agency's science positions, but the high levels aren't where the science comes from: our good decisions depend on information gathered from our scientists in programs and offices throughout the Midwest Region. Their training and their ability to work together provide the basis for accomplishing our mission. Hearings, assignments, and meetings in February have helped emphasize the importance of science in the Service. It's also a time to



focus on the importance of our scientists, and to thank them.

Midwest Regional Director
Robyn Thorson

Wildlife Photographer Dudley Edmondson to Visit Refuge and Regional Office

People of Color in Wildlife Conservation

EA's Redmond sat down with wildlife photographer, Dudley Edmondson.

Redmond: I've met people in the service who have come face to face with grizzly bears and other wild animals. Your work also requires you to be in close proximity to animals that can at will become lethal. Were you ever afraid? How did you avoid detection by the animals? And how do you combat the fear factor with non-traditional audiences?

Edmondson: I have had some dangerous situations in my work. From grizzlies to bull moose but the key thing is to remain calm and no sudden erratic movements. For the general public I would say just be mindful of your surroundings and don't approach wild animals that are deemed dangerous. I had to because it was my job.

Redmond: Is your wife ever afraid for you? Is she a nature lover too?

Edmondson: She is at times but I have cut back on some of that kind of work. She loves nature as much as I do.

Redmond: I walk in nature and spend time in nature, but the idea of walking up on a grizzly bear or a wolf is terrifying. How do you combat the fear factor when you're trying to attract people to nature?

Edmondson: Well the first thing you need to know is your subject. Don't be afraid of animals because of what you have seen on TV, be afraid because of what you actually know about them. Fear is often rooted in ignorance not knowledge. Often times once you have read extensively on a subject and have had a number of encounters with it you learned not to be afraid and instead you learn respect.

Redmond: What do you think are the primary reasons that people of color don't venture into the outdoors more?

Edmondson: Lack of knowledge of outdoors skills, lack of outdoor family traditions and a safety concerns in an environment that is seen as predominately white.

Redmond: Some people say that the absenteeism of people of color in the outdoors is a simple matter of apathy? How do you respond to that?

Edmondson: I would say that may be true but it is because African Americans have no history of positive experiences in the outdoors. What we know about the outdoors we learned from our elders and the stories they tell are of hard labor, long days in the hot sun in the deep south. African Americans today are such urban based people that we have few experiences with the outdoors and have not allowed ourselves experiences that could build appreciation for nature.

Redmond: As you know, many people of color avoid the outdoors because they fear others may hurt them. Have you ever run into any racially motivated incidents?

Edmondson: I have had some in my time. But the key for me is that I go into the outdoors to enjoy communing with nature not to see people or been seen by people. So if other people don't like me there that is their problem. I would say that aside from maybe hunting and fishing, those kinds of situations are extremely rare. Most people understand nature is for everyone and that anyone out there enjoying it is there for the same reason they are and that cuts across all barriers.

Redmond: It might be difficult for traditional stewards of the land to understand this sudden urgency, importance and focus on connecting people to nature. Can you lend some understanding on this subject?



Wildlife Photographer Dudley Edmondson to Visit Refuge and Regional Office

People of Color in Wildlife Conservation

Edmondson: Well it does seem to be very frantic I agree. It is hard to say for sure because I do not have access to any data explaining the surge by agencies and organizations. I can only guess the declining numbers of traditional users and supporters due to population changes is driving the effort to gain the interest of new groups of potential supporters and users in order to keep funding and protection at their current levels.

Redmond: How do you attract families when parents are legitimately concerned about stranger danger?

Edmondson: I think stranger danger by in large is the creation of mass media in order to boost ratings. They take a few isolated incidents and try to turn them into a national trend. I think families and children are in no more or less danger than they have ever been in the past few decades.

Redmond: In your book you ask the question of people of color, "are we up to the enormous task?" what do you think, are people of color up to it? Why, why not? Explain.

Edmondson: I think we can do it but first we need to be armed with information and be part of the discussions and organizations on the environmental front lines. I think we have relied on middle class whites to take care of these issues for us for too long. Times have changed and everybody has to roll up their sleeves now and pitch in.

*--Valerie Rose Redmond,
External Affairs*

Dudley Edmondson, freelance photographer and author of the book "Black and Brown Faces in Americas Wild Places," will exhibit his work, sign books and encourage urban dwellers to discover the beauty and solitude of the natural world in a presentation at the Fort Snelling BHW Federal Building in the G-110 auditorium at 11:00 a.m. on February 29.

He will repeat his presentation at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Bloomington, Minn., at 12:00 p.m. on March 1. The public is invited to bring their cameras to Minnesota Valley NWR and walk the grounds with the photographer afterwards.

These events are sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of its new initiative, "Connecting People with Nature," and in celebration of Black History Month.

A 15-year photography veteran, Edmondson has captured on film nature and wildlife subjects around the country. Many of his images have graced the pages of natural history publications in the United States and Europe. "Nature without question is for everyone. It knows no race, creed or gender and is cheaper than any therapist you could ever hire," says Edmondson.



Ecotourism

Where Is He?

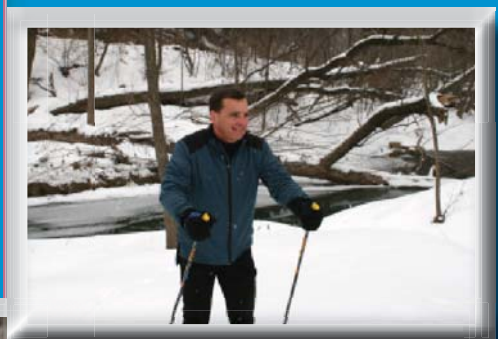
I leave my windowless cubical as close to 3:30 as possible, especially during the seasons when daylight is in short supply. I hurry home to Red Wing to find solace on the Cannon River Trail. I skate-ski along the river bordered by forest lost in the serenity of the trail warmed by moon light. In early October, I leave to bicycle as far as I can before it is too dark to ride, and I celebrate the summer solstice by rollerblading late into the evening.

I ski, skate, run, and bicycle to recharge the best way I know how – by being outdoors. My eye catches the contrasting reddish-orange and black plumage of the flitting redstart, the deep burgundy of the ginger flower, and muddy otter tracks in the snow. I wonder “Am I less a biologist because I do not slow for closer observation?” No! I’m in a hurry to see the setting sun paint the feathers of a bald eagle, to be overwhelmed by the call of spring peepers, or to catch a full moon rising over the snow-covered trail.

I’ll see you at my desk at 7:00 tomorrow morning.

--Rick Frietsche
Engineering Chief

Below: Rick enjoying skiing near Gilmore Creek
in Winona, Minn.



Maintenance Action Teams Save Midwest Region More Than \$5 Million

National Wildlife Refuge System maintenance workers are well known for their ability to develop creative ways to address the daily challenges they face keeping their refuge running smoothly. These challenges usually involve broken machinery, breached dikes, rusted water control structures or any of the thousand other things that can happen on a refuge or wetland management district. However, during the past several years, maintenance workers on Midwest Region refuges have faced a different kind of challenge: too little funding, too few staff and too many projects.

Continuing that tradition of creative problem solving, in 2005 maintenance workers and other staff in the Midwest Region developed a way to help address some of the region's maintenance and construction resource challenges. Their

The first MAT project completed was the restoration of a half-mile-long dike and the installation of a concrete spillway and water control structure at Muscatatuck NWR in southern Indiana. The project was completed for \$120,000 less than the engineering estimates. A project at Wisconsin's Horicon NWR saved the station more than \$283,000.

The third MAT project brought Region 3 and Region 4 staff together for a project at Alabama's Mountain Longleaf NWR that saved the station more than \$1 million.

A project at Ottawa NWR saved the station almost \$500,000 and allowed the refuge to open its new visitor center. Ottawa NWR Manager Doug Brewer was extremely impressed with the dedication and toughness of the team.

In the fall of 2007 the team began one of their most aggressive projects yet; the renovation and expansion of the headquarters building at Great River NWR, along the Mississippi River in Missouri. Once completed, the project is estimated to save the station approximately \$500,000.

"This is the first building construction project the MAT has taken on," said Midwest Region Heavy Equipment Coordinator and Maintenance Action Team Leader Dale Pittman. "This is also a great opportunity for us to learn new skills and take them back to our home stations." Pittman said he feels the projects are a great opportunity for maintenance staff to work together, share ideas and build camaraderie.

"Our maintenance staffs have always been the force that keeps refuges running," said Midwest Region Refuge System Chief Nita Fuller. "Instead of looking at our limited resources and letting the Refuge System fall into greater disrepair, these dedicated professionals stood up and found a way to get the job done. Without their creative thinking, professional skills and love for refuges, these projects simply would not have been completed."

Based on the success of this concept, many Midwest Region stations are clamoring to have MAT projects at their stations and two additional projects are in the planning stages for this year. Fuller says she plans to keep using the team as long as employees find it rewarding and it saves the region money.

--Chuck Trawler
Midwest Region



From left to right: Steve Warner Litchfield WMD, Keith Jensen Horicon NWR, Gary Fairbank Horicon NWR, Kurtis Pursley Great River NWR and Alan Lagemann Crew Leader Also From Great River NWR pause for a moment during construction of a building on Great River NWR.

solution was for maintenance experts from across the region to converge on a station and complete high priority tasks the station did not have the resources to complete on its own. The concept is called a Maintenance Action Team (MAT).

"During construction we had more than 15 inches of rain in a month," said Brewer. "The team worked around the weather, putting in long hours under difficult conditions, to get the job done. They really hung in there and worked hard and to get this job done."

Let's Go Outside!

Courting the Land

There were many people in my life that opened many doors for me to the world waiting to be discovered in nature. My Dad, unbeknownst to him, was probably the first. He grew up in Chicago and moved to the far suburbs to get away from city life and start a family. So I grew up with my parents and three siblings in a relatively new residential development about fifty miles northwest of Chicago. When I was very young, half of our block was still undeveloped and mostly prairie that the local volunteer fire department would burn every other year (that is until the year the wind shifted and nearly caught our

house on fire – I don't think Dad allowed it anymore after that.)

My first memories of being outdoors were of exploring that prairie. When I was about four years old, I loved picking the flowers. I left the milkweeds alone because the milky white sap was hard to wash off; I also liked pulling apart the seed pods in the fall to feel the silky soft seeds and watch them float along in the gentlest breeze. When I was five or so, I heard the song, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" and felt guilty there were no more flowers because little girls had picked them all. I didn't want the

flowers in my prairie to disappear, so I stopped picking them. About four years later three houses were built destroying most of my prairie. It was then that my passion for conservation was kindled.

*--Lisa Reid
Wildlife Biologist
Upper Mississippi River National
Wildlife and Fish Refuge*

Below: A day at the office for Refuge Biologist Lisa Reid finds her out in the Weaver Bottoms sampling aquatic vegetation prior to a summer drawdown.



The Multi-Generational Workforce: *Appreciating Different Approaches*

Generation X: 1961 - 1981

We've been called slackers, job-hoppers and cynics. We've been called these things because our approach to our careers, our personal relationships, and the status quo is not a traditional one. I would argue that we are not slackers, job-hoppers or pessimists. We are simply misunderstood.

We are not slackers, we simply value a work-life balance and refuse to sacrifice our valuable family time for our careers. We see no reason why our desire to achieve a healthy work life balance should not be valued and upheld. Many of us came from single parent households or households with two parents who worked full time. We are accustomed to fending for ourselves with microwaves and video games – the original latchkey generation. Rather than applaud the complete sacrifice of family for a career, we are dismayed by it.

We are not job-hoppers, we are seekers of personal and professional growth. We began our careers in an era of unprecedented economic uncertainty. Our employment histories are often volatile and varied because we have been exposed to deindustrialization, outsourcing, and offshoring. We have witnessed the destruction of traditional permanent job contracts and have gained much of our job experience through temporary employment agency assignments. Many of us have felt overeducated and underemployed and have often “settled” for a position because of the stability it offered. We are the first generation in American history to be economically worse off than our parents. In a recent poll of Gen Xers, it was revealed that more of us believe in UFOs than in the possibility of ever seeing a social security check.

According to Tamara Draut, the author of “Strapped”, Gen X-ers have it much worse than our Baby Boomer parents, because while the earning potential of college grads has stayed the same for three decades, the costs of housing, education and health care have grown exponentially -- much faster than inflation.

The grim financial picture faced by Generation X is the result of a broad governmental failure to regulate the rising costs of higher education, to boost the minimum wage to a livable wage, and to create a sufficient number of full-time jobs -- with benefits -- to ensure that America's massive twenty- and thirty-something work force is healthy and paid well enough to provide for



their families. Recent statistics show that attending college, for many middle-class as well as low-income families, is a no-win situation. In order to land a decent position, you must have a college education, but 87% of the time the salary you will earn in that position will not provide enough for you to live comfortably, keep the lights on and make the minimum payment on your student loans. In 2003, less than a third of young adults aged 25 to 29 had a bachelor's degree. According to Draut, in 1972, the typical male high school graduate, aged 25 to 34, earned \$42,000 in inflation-

adjusted dollars; three decades later, male high school graduates of the same age were earning just over \$29,000.

We are not cynics, we are realists. I have a fourteen year old who desperately wants to attend college. However, she will have to make her own way because I am staggering under the burden of my own astronomical student loan debt. I have seen the cost of obtaining an education rise, the options to pay for such an education besides student loans dwindle, and salaries slow to keep pace with the rate of inflation or the rising cost of professionalism. So, what skills can I bring to the workplace? I am absolutely unafraid of change. I actually expect it and believe it is both inevitable and necessary. I am absolutely unafraid to ask why and refuse to content myself with pat, rehearsed answers. I believe in rewarding effort, talent and initiative – regardless of age or tenure. I believe a leader must be willing to take risks, should take nothing for granted, and should stand for what is right and just – whether or not that is the popular choice. I detest stagnation, love a challenge and am a perpetual student. I expect continuous learning and growth opportunities. I appreciate and embrace diversity as a reflection of the world and a unique problem-solving tool that utilizes the depth and breadth of experiences to arrive at workable solutions. I may be outspoken, but I think that the truth should not be concealed by constructed deceits. I will freely give my opinion, so be very sure you are prepared to hear my concerns when you ask me to voice them.

We don't think we are intimidating, and we are very eager to handle the reins.

*--Andrea Kirk
Migratory Birds*

Celebrating Diversity

Celebrating Excellence

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Employees participated in a myriad of events in celebration of Black History Month. Most events were sponsored by the Federal Employee Black History Month Committee (FEBHC). The FEBHC is comprised of membership is comprised of Service, VA, Homeland Security and other federal agency employees. "The organization was chartered in 2005 to recognize excellence in African American achievements and contributions," says George Lewis, the organization's secretary.



The Regional staff answered Black History e-mail trivia questions and received gift cards for the correct answers. The FEBHC also sponsored a speaker, a history bulletin board and ***The Soul Food Experience***, a luncheon featuring various soul food entries, side dishes and desserts. Service employees widely attended the event, including Refuge Chief, Nita Fuller, who says she loves greens but wondered aloud, "where's the pepper sauce?"



Alicia Perkins and Kasharn Gillard brought the ham and coleslaw. Pam Worrells brought ham hocks and pinto beans. Valerie Redmond brought banana pudding. Lauretha Randle and Kathy Schlener helped with organization, promotion and cleanup, as did the other Service employees mentioned.



In celebration of Black History Month and as part of its new initiative, "Connecting People with Nature," the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will also sponsor two events featuring wildlife photographer, Dudley Edmondson.



--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

Above, left, Service employees enjoy ***The Soul Food Experience***.

Around the Region

Left: Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge Manager Margaret Anderson with a hibernating bear in a cattail marsh on the refuge. The Refuge is working with the Minnesota DNR on a study to learn more about this type of hibernation.



Above: More than 80 kids joined Friends Group members and FWS staff from several River stations to host a youth ice fishing clinic on the Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge.



Above: Byron Clements of Genoa, Wis., received the River Guardian Award from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge at a ceremony held January 26. Byron Clements (center) accompanied by wife Jennifer (right) accepts "River Guardian" award from Refuge Manager, Don Hultman.

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Quote of the Month



*You fill up my senses, Like a night in a forest
Like the mountains in springtime, Like a walk in the rain
Like a storm in the desert, Like a sleepy blue ocean
You fill up my senses, Come fill me again
You fill up my senses, Like a night in a forest
Like the mountains in springtime, Like a walk in the rain
Like a storm in the desert, Like a sleepy blue ocean
You fill up my senses, Come fill me again*

--John Denver, Annie's Song

Kid's Free Fishing Tournament Results

A new generation of youngsters were introduced to the excitement of ice fishing during the Harper's Ferry River Friends 7th annual youth ice fishing tournament, held January 27th. Ninety two children between the ages of 1 and 15 participated in this free event on Joyce Lake on the Mississippi River near Harpers Ferry, Iowa (see attached photographs). All youth participants received a "grab bag" of fishing lures and tackle. In addition, grand prizes were awarded to youth participants in three age groups for the largest fish caught. Prizes included rod/reel combos, lures, tackle boxes, and ice fishing combos. Thanks to the generous donations of local businesses, food (hot dogs, chips and hot chocolate) were provided to all participants. Cabela's of Prairie du Chien donated outfitted tackle boxes for the grand prize winners.

This year's tournament was co-sponsored by the "Friends of Pool 10" and the Harper's Ferry River Friends. The Friends of Pool 10 is a non-profit group created to increase public awareness and appreciation of Pool 10 and to encourage public participation in restoring and preserving the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. No membership fees are charged to become a member of the Friends of Pool 10. For further information about the Friends of Pool 10 please contact Tim Yager, Refuge Manager with the Upper Miss Refuge at (563-873-3423 X12), or Robert Vavra (563-586-2123).



Left: Not a monster, but a "trophy" for any young angler. Fishing was good at the Harper's Ferry River Friends 7th annual kid's ice fishing tournament. Right: Youth ice anglers of all ages participated in the 7th annual Harper's Ferry River Friends kid's ice fishing tournament on January 27th.



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.