



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

February 2009

America's H rtland



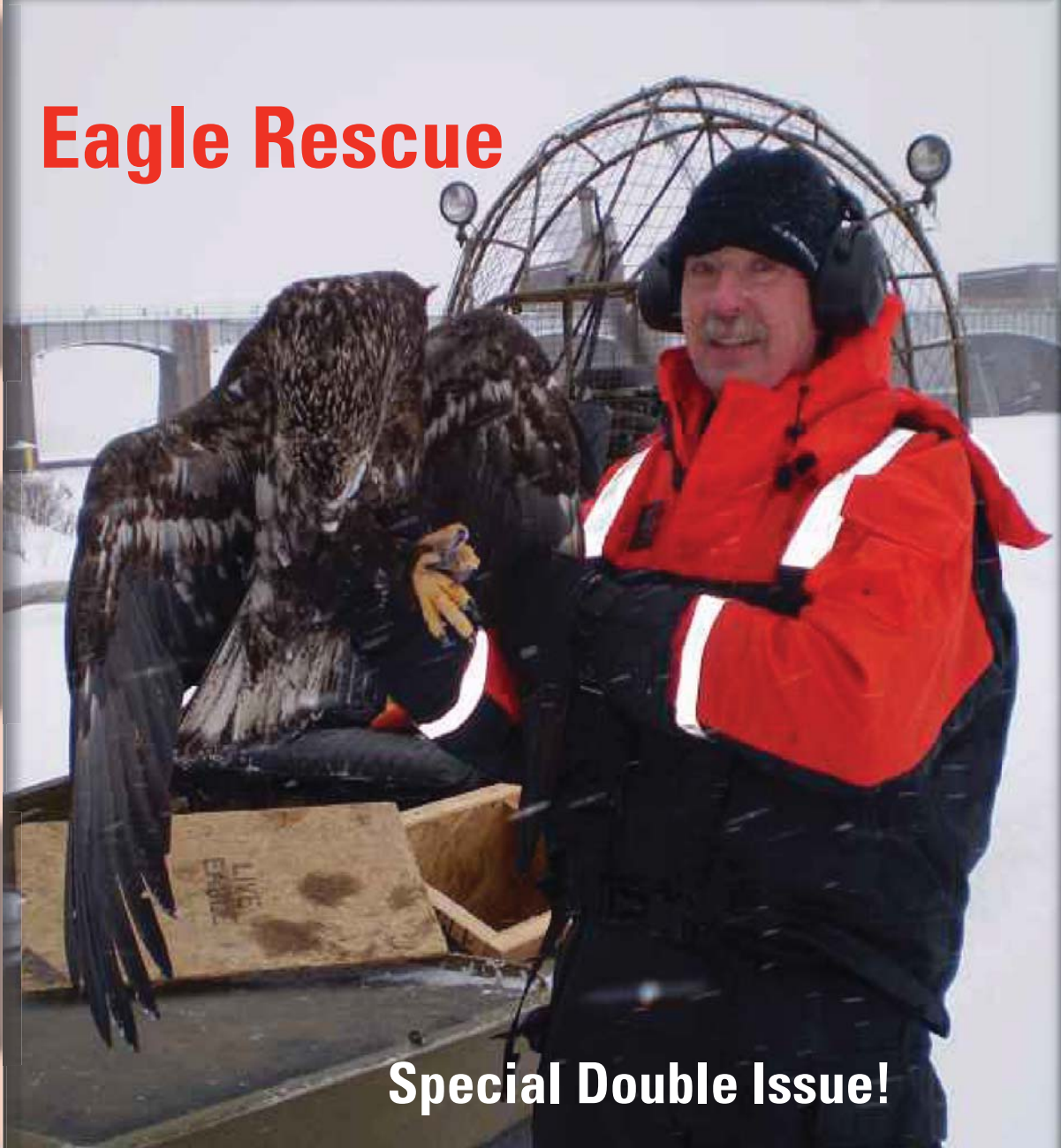
**RD's Sherburne
Snow Shoe**



**1st Rachel
Carson Award**



**Planes, Cranes,
& Automobiles**



Eagle Rescue

Special Double Issue!

Plus:

Forming Partnerships with Let's Go Outside! Backpacks
Chicago Wilderness Named National Model



Editor's Note:

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

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

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

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

On the Cover: Upper Mississippi River Refuge Assistant Manager Tony Batya holding the rescued eagle.
- USFWS photo

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RD's Corner

First off, let me just say Happy New Year!

I have returned to America's heartland and appropriately enough for the month of February, I am loving every bit of it. This month I gathered my gear and set out on an invigorating snowshoe adventure at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. My hands were frozen and tingling as the -32 degrees warmed to a balmy -22 during my half hour trek. The crisp wind and fresh snow, however, offered me some time to reflect on the amazing contributions that you've made last year, keynoted by the presentation of the first ever Rachel Carson Group Award for Scientific Excellence to members of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) in Fergus Falls by former Director H. Dale Hall.

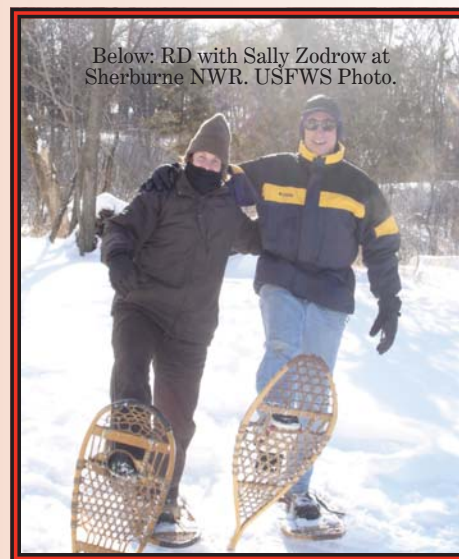
As we usher in a new year, it is an opportune time to reflect on the past, but also to project into the future. I'm looking forward to all of the wonderful accomplishments that we will attain in 2009! Setting priorities to improve efficiency and

effectiveness assures that we will still be on target with our goals and objectives. This year, I would like to issue six priorities for the Midwest Region, which will be expounded upon in the coming months:

1. Utilize sound science for decision making by ascertaining a foundation of understanding.
2. Strengthen our relationships with state partners, tribal governments and NGO partners.
3. Understand the impacts of climate change on the resources here in the Midwest and the shift toward alternative energy and the subsequent impacts.
4. Increase outdoor activity opportunities for young people by making them and their families aware of the resources that we have available.
5. Increase opportunities for the hunting and fishing population; raise awareness of refuge and hatchery resources to facilitate both sports.
6. Coach and mentor employees to be the best they can be by pushing them on to take on new challenges.

These thematic priorities will help us move forward with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife agenda. I believe, just as the Secretary stated in his first address--"we can change the world"--starting with America's heartland.

Tom Melius
Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Region



Below: RD with Sally Zodrow at Sherburne NWR. USFWS Photo.



Above: RD with Sherburne NWR staff. USFWS Photo.



Below: RD with Refuge Manager Ann Sittauer at Sherburne NWR at the site of the proposed new visitor's center. USFWS Photo.



Bald Eagle Rescued Above Lock on Mississippi River

Staff from the Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge rescued an injured bald eagle on December 24. USFWS was notified by Lock and Dam 5a personnel on December 23, that a bald eagle, unable to fly, was located

on the ice above the lock chambers. Eventually, the eagle had moved far enough away from the locks that District

staff Tony Batya and Brian Pember felt a rescue attempt could safely be made. Fortunately, the ice in the main channel of the river was thick enough to support a Refuge airboat.

After three short flights, the eagle was netted and transported to a staff member of the National Eagle Center. Volunteers transported the eagle to the Raptor Rehabilitation Center in St. Paul, Minn. Tests conducted at the Raptor Rehabilitation Center confirmed a lethal level of lead in the eagle. This is fairly common in eagles. Over the past 10 to 15 years, 20 to 25 percent of the eagles treated at the Rehabilitation Center have elevated or clinical levels of lead. Clinical lead levels in 2008 were noted in 33 percent of the treated eagles at the Raptor Rehabilitation Center. --Brian Pember, Biological Technician Wildlife, Upper Mississippi NW&FR - Winona District



*Above:
Upper Mississippi River Refuge
Assistant Manager Tony Batya
holding the rescued eagle.
- USFWS photo*

Successful Disabled Deer Hunt at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge

During the nine-day deer gun season in November at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, hunters with disabilities and their partners had their most successful hunt since the hunt began in 1994. Fifteen hunters ended up participating in the hunt with 13 deer taken by seven hunters. The deer included seven does and six bucks, including one ten-pointer. Six blinds were available for the hunters to use, although they are not restricted to the blind. They could hunt anywhere in the 880-acre area. The hunt was successful even for the hunters who did not shoot a deer as they expressed much appreciation to the Refuge staff for an enjoyable time. --Diane Kitchen, Horicon NWR



Eagle Days at Squaw Creek

December 5-7, 2008

The 30th Annual Eagle

Days at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge was a huge success! On Thursday, December 4. Three eagles from the World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis were introduced to St. Joseph and the surrounding area on a "Live at Five" television program (KQ2 - St. Joseph). On Friday, December 5, approximately 930 students and 100 adults attended the school day program. Students were all able to see the live eagle program put on by the World Bird Sanctuary at the refuge headquarters and get a bus tour of the refuge. The rest of the public saw the eagle show Saturday and Sunday.

The refuge hosted more than 250,000 snow geese, 30,000 ducks, 60 trumpeter swans and 266 bald eagles in the wild during the three day event. Weather conditions were near ideal with sunny skies and day time temperatures in the low 40's. The refuge office had displays about bald eagles, endangered species and live snakes. The kids were able to play a Risky Critters and a bird identification game as well as get a free eagle day poster, button and tattoo. A wood carver was also present.

Visitation this year was the highest since 1996. A total of 3,484 entered the office, 2,013 attended the live eagle show, 7,154 drove the auto tour route and 679 took the free guided bus tour given by the refuge staff. The Mound City Kiwanis Club members encouraged visitors to take the free shuttle bus from the Eagle Nest Truck Plaza down to the refuge headquarters. More than 330 visitors took advantage of this service.

Besides the Mound City Kiwanis Club, there were a host of other cooperators. The Ioway Tribe permitted visitors to park and use the shuttle service and pay to rent the 25 foot inflatable eagle at the headquarters. The Missouri Department of Transportation put up signs on Interstate 29 and erecting a message board on Highway 159, The Friends of Squaw Creek provided food and interpretive sales. The Burroughs and Midland Empire Audubon's Societies provided volunteers and the Missouri Department of Conservation paid for most of the event and provided a host of employees and volunteers.

Service volunteers from Ottawa NWR, Prairie Wetland Learning Center, DeSoto NWR, Great River and Clarence Cannon NWR, Illinois River NWR, Windom WMD and the Litchfield WMD helped the Squaw Creek employees direct traffic, give bus tours, make buttons, put on tattoos and staff displays.

--Ron Bell,
R3-Squaw Creek NWR

Squaw Creek Fall Interns Provide Valuable Service

Two interns from Missouri Western State University developed and presented programs to visitors at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge this fall. This program was attempted during the spring migration and was so successful, it was continued during the fall. Two students, one working on Saturday and one on Sunday from October 4 to November 30, developed a different program each weekend and presented it to interested visitors at 1 p.m. They also spent time driving the auto tour route contacting visitors as well as assisting volunteers staffing the refuge office.

The interns gave programs to 136 visitors and made 832 contacts during the nine weekends. The Midland Empire Audubon Society and Burroughs Audubon Society paid basic stipends for each student to help cover the cost for fuel. This program provided an opportunity for each student to research a subject, develop the topic and then gave them the experience to meet with visitors.



Scientific Excellence

Habitat and Population Evaluation Team Honored with First Ever Rachel Carson Award for Scientific Excellence

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall presented the first ever Rachel Carson Group Award for Scientific Excellence to members of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), located in Fergus Falls. Tom Melius, Regional Director, will be presenting the Fergus Falls HAPET Office with a \$25,000 check this February.

HAPET, a division of the Service's Migratory Birds Program, coordinates the agency's annual Waterfowl Breeding Population and Production Survey, a comprehensive report on the state of ducks, geese and swans in the Prairie Pothole Region. The team also coordinates surveys for a wide range of migratory birds. In addition to the Fergus Falls office, HAPET also has a station in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Above: HAPET team member receives award from Former Director H. Dale Hall.

Stretching through Iowa, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana, and large portions of central Canada, this region was once a haven for waterfowl and migratory birds. Due to agricultural development, it is now one of the most threatened waterfowl habitats in the world.

“HAPET’s work is critical to informing the Service’s migratory bird and waterfowl management objectives,” said John Christian, Assistant Regional Director for the Migratory Birds Program. “Their on-the-ground survey work allows us to make conservation decisions that maximize benefits to species and habitat in peril.”

The team uses biological models and GIS technology to analyze migratory bird populations in the U.S. portion of the Prairie Pothole Region. Since 2000, HAPET has joined forces with multiple conservation partners including state agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) to assist in biological data collection and analysis for a broad range of migratory bird species in the tall grass prairie region of the upper Midwest.

Members of the Fergus Falls HAPET office recognized in the Director’s award presentation were Diane Granfors, Dan Hertel, Dawn Johnson, Fred Oslund and Tony Rondeau.

“It’s an honor to lead this team,” said Rex Johnson, Fergus Falls HAPET Team

Leader. “We think we bring greater efficiency to Fish and Wildlife Service programs.”

As part of the award, HAPET will receive \$50,000 from the Service to further the team’s research and scientific work.

“Rachel Carson left a legacy beyond her years with the Fish and Wildlife Service,” said Tom Melius, Midwest Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “HAPET demonstrates how Carson’s dedication and work ethic live on throughout this agency.”

Carson began her career with the Service as an aquatic biologist, and later became the Service’s Editor in Chief of Publications. Both author and ecologist, she published numerous books on marine life and the dynamic relationship between humans and the environment.

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

Chicago Wilderness Named National Model

The National Forum on Children and Nature has selected Chicago Wilderness, a conservation coalition dedicated to protecting our natural resources and its future, as a national model that successfully demonstrates creative and effective ways to reconnect kids with nature. . . . “The National Forum on Children and Nature celebrates projects that demonstrate how to get kids back outdoors,” said Larry Selzer, president and CEO of The Conservation Fund, which hosts the Forum. “This is critical for children’s health--and for the future of our environment. Saving a generation is not a spectator sport. These ideas invite corporate leaders, educators, community planners, government officials and others into the game.”

EA’s Valerie Redmond chats with John Rogner on the Chicago Wilderness success story.

EA: What was your reaction when you learned that Chicago Wilderness (CW) was selected by the National Forum on Children and Nature as a national model? Please tell us about the initiative.

Rogner: I was very pleased, of course. Chicago Wilderness is an alliance of over 230 member

organizations committed to protecting and restoring the world-class biodiversity of the Chicago metropolitan area. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is a founding member and has provided support to this amazing example of collaborative conservation because it has proven to be a good vehicle for accomplishing our mission in the Chicago area.

Part of our mission, here and elsewhere, is to help connect people to nature and the fish and wildlife they entrust to us. This becomes increasingly important as we see the public – young people in particular - drift away from the outdoor activities that create these connections. So we shared with our Chicago Wilderness partners the sense of urgency that led us to develop the proposal eventually selected by The National Forum on Children and Nature.

The proposal itself is an implementation strategy for the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision – essentially a comprehensive conservation plan for the entire Chicago region. Through new reserves, connecting habitat corridors, conservation design for subdivisions, and ultimately natural habitats on corporate campuses and residential

lots, we would be part of a regional effort to build nature into the places where we live so that it is readily accessible to children throughout the region. And in the process we protect and restore the habitats that ultimately support our trust resources. To do this we



Above: John Rogner at a press conference with Illinois Lt Gov Pat Quinn to announce a school rain garden program USFWS is doing with his office. USFWS Photo.

will have to engage planners and decision-makers at many levels. These include transportation and regional planning agencies, open space agencies, local governments that decide on local comprehensive land use plans, developers who design new residential and commercial subdivisions, and individual property owners.

EA: Is the National Forum on Children and Nature the same as the Children and Nature Network initiative headed up by Richard Louv? If not, how is it different and what if any affiliation do you have with the organization?

Rogner: They are different but related efforts. Both are grounded in the concerns for the disconnection between people and nature so eloquently described by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods*. The Children and Nature Network, chaired by Richard Louv, was created to encourage and support the people and organizations working to reconnect children and nature. Its purpose is networking and information-sharing.



John Rogner working the details. USFWS Photo.

Chicago Wilderness Named National Model

The National Forum on Children and Nature was actually conceived through a breakthrough dialogue convened by the Service, The Conservation Fund, and Richard Louv in September 2006. Leaders from public agencies, corporations, the media, and health and environmental organizations explored ideas for how to reconnect children with nature. The major outcome was to elevate the issue to the national level through the National Forum. Comprised of governors, mayors, corporate CEO's, heads of environmental organizations, and health professionals, the Forum solicited and identified over 25 nationally significant demonstration projects in the four key areas of health, education, the built environment, and media/culture that collectively will move us toward improved children's health and environmental stewardship and serve as models for future action.

There are several members of the National Forum from the Chicago area including Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, Field Museum President John McCarter, and Wendy Paulson, wife of Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson. The Service does not have a formal affiliation with the Forum, other than, in this case, as a partner in a project selected as one of their nationally significant projects.

EA: What was USFWS's role in the vision and the selection process? What was your specific role? How did you get involved with it?

Rogner: In the late 1990's Chicago Wilderness developed its guiding document, the CW Biodiversity Recovery Plan, which was primarily a list of strategies and actions. Shortly after it was completed we realized we needed an on-the-ground

representation of where we would focus our work, and that was the genesis of the Green Infrastructure Vision. The Green Infrastructure Vision was developed by convening Chicago area natural resource specialists with extensive knowledge of the region's natural communities and expertise in conservation design and sustainable development. They put the basic outline of the vision on maps during a day-long exercise and the maps were then revised and refined over a 6-month period. The Service was instrumental in several ways. First, we provided financial support for the entire project. Second, we served as resource experts on the natural communities of the region. Third, as Chair of Chicago Wilderness I helped galvanize the members behind this important project to make sure it had



Above: Rogner receives the Department's Environmental Achievement Award for his work with Chicago Wilderness. USFWS Photo.

the broadest level of participation, and I also helped lead the day-long mapping exercise.

EA: Were there other FWS employees that worked on it with you? If so, who were they and what were their roles?

Rogner: Jeff Mengler, my staff botanist and wetland ecologist, has extensive knowledge of the distribution of the region's natural communities and served

as a technical expert for the mapping exercise.

EA: What was the criterion for the selection? Was there a submission process? If so, what did it entail? If not, how did the forum learn about it?

Rogner: The Green Infrastructure proposal was solicited by the panels set up to staff the Forum. There were four panels of experts: education, built environment, health, and culture and communications. The panels developed a process for creating and soliciting projects and programs all over the country. The Chicago Wilderness project was identified early on because of the Chicago area representation on the panels and because Larry Selzer of The Conservation Fund was well aware of the work underway here. Pre-proposals were solicited from all the known organizations and people who were doing nationally important work in this area. A small subset of these were invited to submit full proposals, one of which was the Chicago Wilderness proposal. In the end, it was selected because it was the most ambitious in terms of regional scope and impact, it enlisted the most extensive group of partners to implement the project, and because it contained the unique angle of building nature into where kids live and play.

EA: What kind of activities will the Art and Nature Youth Program feature?

Rogner: The Art and Nature Youth Program is sponsored by the Global Alliance of Artists, which is a Chicago Wilderness member organization. It is all about getting kids involved in nature outings and then expressing that love for nature through art. Projects will include inner city youth art projects including paintings, drawings, journals, musical compositions, and a student produced documentary of their Art and Nature program.

Continued on page 23.

John Leonard

A Midwest Angle

On January 8, John Leonard, Tribal Liaison for the Midwest Region retired from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Leonard's remarkable career with the Service spanned five decades, after being hired as a co-op student from the University of Massachusetts to do a Fish Population Survey in the Connecticut River.

The throngs of office staff and tribal partners that crowded into the 6th floor Regional Director's Conference room and even out into the hall, speak volumes about the love and respect held by those who came and in some cases traveled hundreds of miles to say goodbye to Leonard and his wife of over forty years, Mardell.

Mike Swan, Natural Resources Director for White Earth Band of Ojibwe; Mic Isham, Conservation Director for Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; and Larry Wawronowicz, Dir. of Dept. of Fish and Game for the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior were among the many tribal government representatives who came to bid farewell. Tribal representatives honored him with gifts, plaques and lots of hugs to express their appreciation.



"I think the great turnout from tribal representatives is indicative of the impact John has had on this program," said Jason Holm, Leonard's supervisor. "John made it a point to treat his constituents with respect, consistency, and compassion, and I think that really served the relationship well. Tribal partners are essential in the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats throughout the nation, and it's clear that their efforts in the Midwest are paying dividends."

An avid angler, Leonard decided to hang up the waders and head to North Carolina where he and his wife plan to spend many leisurely hours playing with their young grandchildren.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

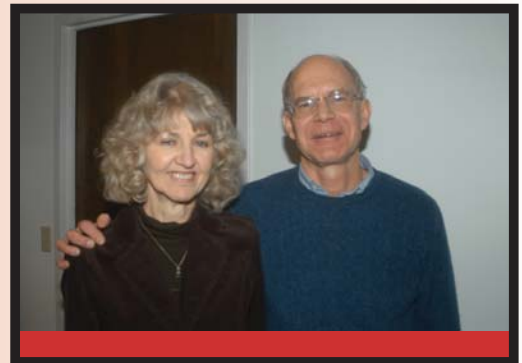


The throngs of people that crowded into the sixth floor RD Conference room at Fort Snelling and even out into the hall to say goodbye to Leonard and his wife, Mardell, speaks well to the love and respect held for Leonard. Above a few express their appreciation. Photos by Valerie R. Redmond.

SAYS GOODBYE



On December 31, regional office employees gathered to honor Rick Schuldt's 38 years of government service and stewardship of our natural resources. His career included positions throughout the Midwest Region with the Fish and Wildlife Service. He plans to enjoy his retirement time in the great outdoors. RD's Conference Room



Right Rick Schuldt says goodbye. Photos by Valerie R. Redmond.



Let's Go Outside!

Queen of the Snows Echoes Call

The Snow Queen likes to hunt so EA's Redmond went out to talk to her.

EA: What exactly is your title?

Stoeckel: Certainly. It's St. Paul Winter Carnival 2008 Queen of the Snows.

EA: Fabulous and congratulations.

Stoeckel: Thank you.

EA: Should I bow or curtsy?

Stoeckel: Oh no. It's still just me. I remember the night I got crowned, I went I don't know if I'm worthy of this 'cause I'm just a girl that deer hunts. And I know it sounds so silly, but I did think those thoughts 'cause it's such an illustrious position to have. So much respect is given to the carnival as a whole.

EA: That's what I wanted to talk to you about—your deer hunting experience. How did you get involved in it and why is it your passion?

Stoeckel: Well, it's a family tradition, I think that definitely makes a big component. It's been in my family my entire life. I grew up and it was always that time of year. Where it was that great family bonding time. And what I love most about it is that one time of year that I pull myself aside from all the different distractions of today's society, so to speak. You know...no cell phone, no distractions. And you're just sitting in this stand and just... you just think a lot, you sit real still and get to see a lot of great, beautiful landscaping, listen to the birds chirping and the squirrels running around. [They're] almost running on your boot, 'cause you've been sitting there for so long.

EA: Right. Where do you go hunting?

Stoeckel: I hunt in between Cambridge and St. Frances area, north of here.

EA: Now I understand that you're a big advocate for women hunters.

Stoeckel: Most definitely. I just think it's a wonderful sport to be a part of and it's something that a lot of people say—'You hunt? No. No. You're a girl and you're feminine.' And I say, 'Well, of course you can take both those on and still enjoy that.' So I'm about making sure that we can get out and enjoy [nature's beauty]—men, women and children.

EA: And can you tell me who Larry is? I want to hear about Larry.

Stoeckel: (Laughs) Larry is the shoulder mount hanging in my office. And he's the 10 point buck I shot a few years ago. And I my family was like, you have to mount this. And I said, 'what am I going to do with a deer mount? I'm not going to put it in my living room.' And they my boss thought it was so intriguing, he said, 'bring it into the office.' And he [Larry] has weird decorations on him. You know, Christmas he'll have candy canes hanging and he's had a Rudolph nose and just little [cute] things I guess to add even more personality to Larry.

EA: Now how did you come up with the name Larry? Is it someone you know?

Stoeckel: Well, I did get asked that a lot and I think a lot of it came—my grandpa and I were very close and he passed and his name was Lawrence and sometimes people called him Larry...I felt he as right there with me that day.

EA: Can you tell us a little about your safety practices?

Stoeckel: I think it's definitely important to get your gun safety. Be very aware. Treat the mussel, you know, [as if] a gun is always loaded. My grandfather taught gun safety years ago and it's the thing that I definitely advocate in every regard.

EA: Do you see a lot of women out there when you go? Or some at least?

Stoeckel: Some. I am the only girl in our

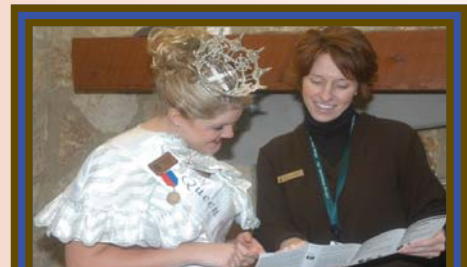
hunting party. But you're starting to see women's line of clothing in different sporting goods stores. So they're catching on.

EA: What advice would you have for organizations like USFWS who are trying to connect people with nature.

Stoeckel: I would say something along the lines of a mentorship program, if that's possible. I mean I would love to volunteer with something like that especially after this year of being with the St. Paul Winter Carnival. Because I think someone has got to have someone take them under their wing to at least get them going in some direction and continue programs like you have here at the [refuge], where individuals can just come out and just—it doesn't need to be an extreme back packing trip. It could just be walking and playing outside or watching birds and things like that.

EA: Thank you so much, Brooke. It was a pleasure talking with you. And congratulations.

Stoeckel: Yes. Yes. Thank you very much.



Above: Snow Queen gets refuge info from Beth A. Ullenberg, a manager at the Minnesota Valley NWR. USFWS Photo.



Queen of the Snows with her prize, Larry. - USFWS photos by Valerie Redmond.

Forming Partnerships with Let's Go Outside Backpacks

Going outside is getting a little easier along the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Fishery and Refuge (NWFR) with the Let's Go Outside Backpacks. Derva Burke, Lansing librarian and Tim Loose, refuge operations specialist have partnered to provide backpacks at the Lansing, Iowa library. Loose commented, "Once we have our virtual geocache routes set up we hope to include a GPS unit and digital camera in each pack, as well as instructions on how to get started. OK, the next step is yours. Get down to the Library and get your family outside."

Pam Steinhaus, Park Ranger at Savanna District has been delivering backpacks to area libraries too. "We are really excited about this backpack because we were looking at kits to get kids outside and this is a great tool that will help us do that," said Connie Boonstra at the Odell Library in Morrison, Ill. Steinhaus says the Clinton librarian, a cyclist, uses the refuge bike trail and she thinks the backpack is a wonderful way to get kids outside. "I'm happy to be a partner in the Let's go Outside! backpack project," she says.

Winona District also partnered with one of the local elementary schools. Luke Merchlewitz, second grade teacher for Washington-Kosciosko Elementary school was excited to receive 25 backpacks that his second grade class could check out and go outside! "This is perfect because we are reading Henry and Mudge and the Starry Night by Cynthia Rylant," beamed Merchlewitz, "and these backpacks will help my second graders get outside."

Winona District also formed a partnership with Winona Health and the Healthy Kids Club. "We are so grateful for the Let's Go Outside! Backpacks," remarked Jennifer Olson,

public relations specialist for Healthy Kids Club and Winona Health, "We will be sending out a news release soon letting the public know these are available through Winona Health/HKC." Olson also put an announcement on our Intranet site and so she has no doubt they'll be all checked-out soon. She thanked the district after explaining that they are "very cool"!

--Cynthia Samples, R3-UMRNW&FR-Complex HQ



The following is an excerpt from the Winona Health web site www.winonahealth.org/HKC/:

"Let's Go Outside!" Backpacks

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Refuge generously donated 15 "Let's Go Outside" backpacks to Healthy Kids Club - Winona Health. These backpacks are to encourage kids to explore the outdoors and get active. Each backpack contains: A thermometer clip, A cloud watching weather window, A bug finder, A *Nature in a Nutshell* book, binoculars and more. Below are the details on how you can check-out a backpack for your child:

- Backpacks can be checked out at no charge for two weeks at a time through Winona Health's Community Relations department, 507.457.4161.
- Children using backpacks must be in the 6-11 age range.
- Two backpacks may be checked out per family.

Please note that all items must be returned with the backpacks. Please keep all items clean and in working condition so other children can use them. Thank you!



Top Left: Odell Librarian, Connie Boonstra is happy to put a Let's Go Outside Backpack in the library for checking out. Park Ranger, Pam Steinhaus delivers one to the library. Top Right, Bottom Left: Second graders at W-K Elementary in Winona, MN can't wait to check out the backpacks through the school library and try them on. USFWS Photo.

Saving the Planet... One Class Room at a Time

The health of the planet depends not only on environmental professionals, but on a voting constituency that cares. But where will these people come from? Traditionally, they have been naturally groomed to take the helm by environments, typically, family environments, that foster a conservation ethic through personal childhood experiences. But changing demographics, fragmented landscapes, development pressures, electronic entertainment and others, all threaten the process, if not made it obsolete--at least the part that takes place naturally.

Most experts agree that saving the world by handing the baton to the next generation will take some concerted effort.

And saving the planet is exactly what Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is doing--one classroom at a time. The refuge's partner program offers students tangible experiences with the outdoors through regular visits to the refuge. Teachers and rangers immerse students in lessons and activities that stem from a standard-based curriculum.

Jill Forsman is a kindergarten teacher at World Cultures Magnet School in St. Paul, one of the partner schools that is dedicated to high achievement and making meaningful connections with learners. "It's just a great opportunity for inner city kids to come and experience nature when they don't have anything," says Forsman. "To them it's like magic."

The school's vision maintains that "...learners will understand the relationship between their lives and the lives of others and the relevance of their education experiences to their roles in society."

The partner program was piloted in 2007 and participates with three elementary schools. "The Partner Schools Program is an initiative that emphasizes long-term learning for students and their teachers by using Refuge lands as an outdoor classroom," says Beth Ullenberg

Partner School Coordinator at the refuge, "It connects young people with nature by providing them with hands-on, real life experiences with plants and wildlife, while immersing them in the outdoors." --Valerie Redmond, *External Affairs*



Above: Kids from World Cultures Magnet School enjoy nature lessons at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The Service Says Thanks To The Bowhunting and Archery Industry

A cold and windy Indy hosted the annual Archery Trade Association (ATA) Trade Expo, the largest archery and bowhunting trade show in the world, from January 6-10, 2009. The Indiana Convention Center hosted more than 3,500 exhibitors, manufacturers, distributors and retailers - all in the business of bows and arrows.

More than 8,000 people filled the Indiana Convention Center on the first day of the trade show. "Our registration area was snowed under when the doors opened Thursday morning, and we were out of breath by the time noon arrived," said ATA CEO/President Jay McAninch.

Representatives from the industry's leading manufacturers and distributors including Trophy Ridge, Darton, Easton and Mathews showcased their products with exhibits spanning the more than 300,000 square feet convention hall. Shooting lanes were set up around the edges of the convention hall for buyers to test various longbow and crossbow brands.

As bow hunting and archery equipment manufacturers promoted their latest product lines, staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Indiana Department

of Natural Resources took time to educate manufacturers and retailers about the benefits of the excise taxes they pay on their products on the sport and art form they know and love.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Program administers grants that benefit wildlife and people by allocating funding for hunter education programs and wildlife restoration projects. The funding comes from a 12.4 percent excise tax on hunting equipment, including bows and arrows.

Hannibal Bolton, Assistant Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and Joyce Johnson, Chief of Policy and Programs, as well as Midwest Regional representatives, represented the Service at the trade show. Service staff presented two seminars for trade show attendees discussing the benefits of wildlife restoration efforts from excise taxes generated by the bowhunting and archery industries. A representative from the Internal Revenue Service also answered specific questions from manufacturers and distributors about the collection process.

"We come to these shows to educate folks on tax law and to address any concerns they may have," said Freda George, tax analyst with the IRS and member of a Federal Excise Tax Working Group. "We also provide materials that list what items are taxable and not taxable."

"By showing manufacturers and distributors how the money they pay in taxes is used to benefit the industry they are part of, we are promoting the future

of bowhunting and archery," said Fabian Romero, Federal Aid Grants Administrator for the Midwest Region. "They want to know where the money is going, and it's our job to educate them." Just this year in the state of Indiana alone, more than \$5 million in federal funding was distributed to state DNR to help fund hunter education programs and on-the-ground wildlife restoration.

Archery education programs like NASP (National Archery in the Schools Program) are just one of the many hands-on initiatives supported by federal grants. State agencies, like Indiana Department of Natural Resources, apply for both competitive and noncompetitive grants, often in partnership with non-profit or other conservation-oriented organizations. Gary Armstrong, Indiana DNR State Grant Coordinator said this year Indiana DNR partnered with Purdue University to conduct research on the wood rat, an endangered species in the state. With federal aid dollars, Indiana has also built several archery ranges that facilitate positive outdoor experiences for both children and adults. Armstrong also said the Indiana DNR spends a lot of time working with private landowners, since around 90 percent of Indiana land is privately owned. Wildlife restoration funds generated by these excise taxes help fund technical assistance initiatives to educate landowners on how to deal with invasive species, and enhance wildlife habitat on their land.

Wildlife Restoration funds have also helped build archery ranges in DNR's Fish and Wildlife Areas around the state. Just this year, an archery range was dedicated in a park in Lake County, Indiana. "We are also excited to start opening up archery ranges in more urban areas, because archery is such a healthy way for kids to get outdoors and enjoy themselves," Armstrong said. Continued on page 22.



Above: Students participating in National Archery in the Schools Program. Credit: Wisconsin DNR

New Law Enforcement Officer Patrols at Shiawassee Refuge

Refuge Officer Joseph E. Hughes reported to duty at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge on December 15. Hughes comes to the refuge from the National Park Service where he worked at several high profile units with very active law enforcement programs, including Yosemite National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Pinnacles National Monument. Consequently, Hughes has extensive law enforcement experience in both natural resource and public use realms.

Law enforcement is a critical issue at the refuge that affects the protection of natural resources and the safety of visitors. The refuge attracts an abundance of wildlife and has diverse habitat management programs. However, the refuge also attracts 60,000 visitors per year and is adjacent to the population centers of the City of Saginaw, Saginaw Township, and James Township. Consequently, 600 - 700 law enforcement incidents are documented at the refuge annually.



Above: The new refuge officer, Joseph E. Hughes reports to duty. USFWS Photo.

Some of the more significant resource incidents have included poaching of white-tailed deer and garter snakes, commercial harvest of earthworms, shooting of a sandhill crane, low sightseeing helicopter over-flights, and airboat disturbance of bald eagles. Severe civil incidents have included car clouting, missing persons, a suicide attempt, marijuana cultivation, and arson. Meanwhile, the refuge must respond to chronic offenses such as dumping of household and construction waste, ATV and snowmobile trespassing, vandalism, and boundary encroachment. Further, Shiawassee Refuge is responsible for law enforcement on four islands within Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge and 118 Farm Services Administration conservation easements spread across 44 counties.

--Steve Kahl, R3-Shiawassee NWR

Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Kids Ice Fishing Clinic

The Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Genoa, Wisc. will host their Annual Ice Fishing Day for children six to 12 years old, which will be held on Saturday February 7.

Schedule

8:30am to 9:00am	Registration
9:00am to 9:15am	Ice Safety
9:00am to 9:15am	Ice Fishing Tips
9:15 a.m. to 12:00	Open Fishing
12:00 to 12:30	Lunch
1:00P	Dismissal

A light lunch will be provided for the children, parents, volunteers and employees in a heated tent. Fishing poles, bait and tackle will be provided by the La Crosse Area Fisheries Offices in cooperation with the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fisheries Services.

The event is weather dependent. Cancellation of this event will be announced on local radio stations WVRQ, 98.3 and Cow 97.1 by 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the event. --Darla Wenger, Genoa NFH



The Birds!

Waterfowl Get a Helping Hand After Oil Spill

Oil and waterfowl don't mix, and dozens of Canada geese and mallards put that theory to the test when they encountered a fuel spill in Troy, Michigan, in late 2008. Fortunately, a multi-agency effort, led by the Service's East Lansing Field Office, responded to the spill and successfully treated about 50 mallards and geese.



The spill occurred when diesel fuel leaked from a parked semi-truck into a storm drain and eventually found its way to Spencer Drain, a creek-like open water drain system used by ducks and geese. In all, the oil affected more than 175 waterfowl; about 50 birds required treatment.

Working with the Service were Oakland County, the City of Troy, the Michigan Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources, and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Private partners included Marine Pollution Control, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, Michigan Humane Society, Howell Nature Center and Lawson Trucking Company.

Partners coordinated efforts to capture the affected birds, clean them and care for them until they could be released. A utility company donated warehouse space where MPC and Tri-State constructed a temporary rehab facility and trained 55 volunteers to assist in the effort. Forty-eight birds were eventually released back into Spencer Drain, where the diesel fuel no longer posed a threat. Two birds will be released when they re-grow feathers; two Canada geese died.

--Lisa Williams, R3-East Lansing FO



Above: Canada geese return to the water after treatment for exposure to diesel fuel. USFWS photo by Lisa Williams.

Prairie Science Class Partners with Fergus Falls WMD in Forb Research

The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center received a \$1,180 Community Connections grant from Otter Tail Power Corporation Foundation to support a project called, "Effects of Periodic Mowing on Survival and Persistence of Forbs Seeded into a Species-Poor Grassland."

It's a long name, but what it means is an opportunity for students in the Fergus Falls School District and professional in the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District (FFWMD) and Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to learn together using the scientific method to conduct applied research. The study is part of Prairie Science Class classroom instruction and field work for both 4th and 5th grades, 230 students total.

The project will help determine how monthly mowing affects the survival and persistence of forbs seeded into grassland dominated study plots. Funds were used to purchase materials such as seed and meter sticks. In spring, 5th graders sowed seed onto the first study area burned in fall 2007. The plot was monitored and mowed during the summer to disturb the grass canopy and reduce competition for forb seeds and seedlings. In November, 4th graders systematically surveyed for forbs on the 20 square meter study site, while 5th graders surveyed a second study site to be burned and seeded in spring and mowed in summer 2009. It will take several years of student surveys to determine if forb species diversify and become more abundant over time. --Molly Stoddard, Fergus Falls Prairie Learning Wetlands Center

Accolades

Matt Sprenger Reports as Midwest Region Area 2 Refuge Supervisor

Matt Sprenger recently reported for duty as the new Area 2 Refuge Supervisor for the Midwest Region. Sprenger replaces Jon Kauffeld who recently retired. As the Area 2 Refuge Supervisor, Sprenger will supervise 24 national wildlife refuges and two wetland management districts in the states of Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

Sprenger received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from South Dakota State University and a Masters Degree in Wildlife Science from Texas Tech University.

Prior to taking his first position with the Service at the Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District, Sprenger spent several years with The Nature Conservancy working on projects, including Glacial Ridge NWR, in northwestern Minnesota.

Sprenger spent a year at Detroit Lakes WMD before moving west to Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota. He then took the refuge manager position at the Illinois River National Wildlife Refuges prior to accepting the position as refuge supervisor at the Regional Office in Minneapolis.

"I see my job as a liaison between refuges and the regional office," said Sprenger. "I hope to function as both

a filter and a sounding board for refuge managers in order to help them get the resources they need to manage their refuge."

Sprenger acknowledges that he may not have as much experience as some of the refuge managers he now supervises, but he sees that as a benefit. "Some of the managers in my area have been, and will continue to be, my mentors. They are all professionals and I know they will help me to succeed."



Above: Matt Sprenger.

"A major goal of mine is to work with as many people as I can to help develop a workforce that can lead us into the future," added Sprenger. "We are looking at a massive loss of critical skills

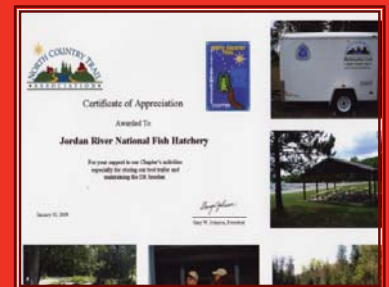
through retirements in the next five years and we need to develop a cadre of experienced and capable people ready to step-up and lead."

Sprenger has four children, two girls and two boys. The children and his wife Christina are going to finish the school semester back in Illinois and will be moving to Minneapolis sometime in January.

--Chuck Traxler, External Affairs

North Country Trail Association (NCTA) Presents Award to Jordan River NFH

On January 10th at the Tittabawassee Chapter meeting of the NCTA held in Houghton Lake Michigan, chapter president Gary Johnson awarded Jordan River NFH Fish Biologist Tim Smigielski with a certificate of appreciation for the hatchery. NCTA has become a partner and supporter of the hatchery through the Friends of the Hatchery. Hatchery staff provides accommodations for meetings and a place to stage gear or tools and equipment used to work on the trail. A section of trail runs adjacent to the Jordan River Hatchery grounds. Tim attended the annual meeting to report progress on the joint Adirondack shelter project at the hatchery. He was pleasantly surprised with the award recognizing the hatchery for providing storage for the NCTA tool trailer and assisting with equipment maintenance and winterization. The NCTA is a strong volunteer based organization. Jordan River NFH welcomes NCTA to our volunteer and partnership family.



Volunteer Recognition

Winona Community Leader Receives Award from Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

James Eddy of Winona, Minn. received the River Guardian Award from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge this year.

Eddy, 75, was honored for his many years of service with the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges, a citizen support group which raises funds for projects, does advocacy for the refuge, and provides volunteer assistance on numerous habitat and public use projects.

Eddy served as president of the group from 2001 until stepping down as president in January. He will remain active on the Friends board of directors.

During his tenure, Eddy provided steady leadership to the group, especially during the often contentious years when the refuge prepared its Comprehensive Conservation Plan. He also was tireless in his efforts to inform members of Congress and the media about the values and needs of the refuge.

“Jim is one of those selfless people of energy you could always count on to get the job done,” according to Refuge Manager Don Hultman. “If there was a refuge-sponsored event, Jim would always be there whether it was a kid’s fishing day, tree planting, or a river clean-up.”

Eddy is no stranger to the Winona community. He was a professor of political science at Winona State



University from 1965 until his retirement in 1995. He is currently on the board of directors for the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, and is president or “Top Devil Dog” of the Hiawatha Valley Marines which sponsors the successful “Toys for Tots” program each Christmas.

Born in Howard Lake, Minn., Eddy attended St. John’s University and received his PhD from the University of Oklahoma. He was on active duty with the Marines from 1953-56 and served in the Marine Corps Reserve from 1966-78, attaining the rank of major.

The River Guardian Award recognizes citizens who have demonstrated outstanding actions in the service to people and/or the resources of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The award is presented irregularly at the discretion of the refuge manager.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge – Winona offices held a dinner to honor volunteers who contributed a combined total of over 2,400 hours of service representing over \$45,000 to the Refuge during the past year. Volunteer activities included assisting in the Refuge booth at community functions, biological surveys, youth fishing days, river cleanups, photography assignments, and youth educational activities.



Above: 2008 Volunteer of the Year Bree Malone receives award from Brian Pember, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The 2008 Volunteer of the Year was Bree Malone of St Paul, MN. Bree contributed over 140 hours to the refuge last year conducting waterfowl disturbance monitoring during the fall waterfowl migration while a student at Winona State University.

Many other volunteers were recognized for contributing hours this past year.

The volunteer program is an excellent way to gain experience, help wildlife, meet interesting people and is open to all ages and abilities. If you would like to enjoy a productive and rewarding experience as a Refuge Volunteer, please call (507) 494-6237.

Illinois Project Leaders Meet to Discuss Fish & Wildlife Action Plan

On December 9-10, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) project leaders and Regional Office program managers held their second semi-annual meeting to discuss opportunities for both agencies to explore opportunities to coordinate implementation of the Illinois Fish & Wildlife Action Plan (Plan). The Service uses these plans as a way to align our goals, strategies and actions with those of the states and to redefine our relationship so that we become a full conservation partner.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mike Conlin, Chief of the Illinois DNR's Office of Resource Conservation and John Rogner, Field Supervisor for the Service's Chicago Ecological Services Field Office. Service field offices were represented, as was the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration.

Illinois' plan identifies a statewide system of Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA's), which are areas that have high concentrations of rare or significant natural communities and/or species. These areas also have high potential for restoring these features. With support from a State Wildlife Grant, the IDNR is beginning to develop partnership models, track planning progress, define priority activities and develop performance measures for COA's. The project would also examine whether boundaries of COA's defined in the original Plan should be re-drawn. The focus of this meeting was to discuss ways that Service offices could assist in this project, especially by integrating past and on-going refuge planning into COA's. IDNR staff also presented models that are being used to build a Wildlife Habitat

Planning Tracking System and a Statewide Streams Database. Both tools would be used to track implementation of key components identified in the plan, and will ultimately have great utility to both agencies in such areas as population modeling, climate change planning and impact assessment.

Numerous other topics related to Service programs, initiatives, and opportunities to coordinate them with IDNR, were also discussed. Among these were:

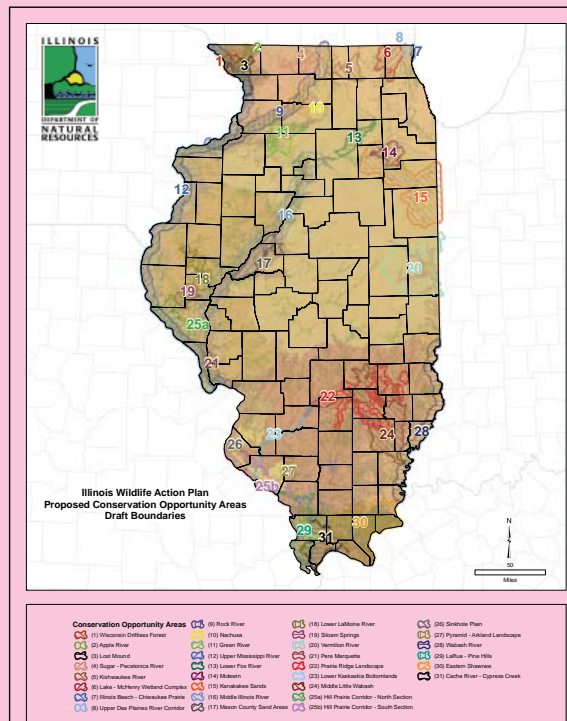
1. -The National Fish Habitat Action Plan.
2. -The Regional Wildlife Disease Response Team.
3. -The Northeast Illinois Urban Fishing Program, and other opportunities for both agencies to "Connect People with Nature."
4. -The Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, and impending move/co-location of the Service's Illinois Private Lands Office at IDNR headquarters in Springfield.
5. -Hunting and trapping opportunities on Illinois' National Wildlife Refuges.

treated to a presentation entitled "Future of Illinois Biodiversity," by Dr. Brian Anderson, Director of the Illinois Natural History Survey. Anderson demonstrated that in order to meet goals set out in the Plan, Illinois will need to greatly expand initiatives that encourage or enable habitat conservation throughout the state.

Finally, the participants at the meeting held a lengthy discussion on ways to manage agency activities and meet increasing public demand on resources in an era when both the state and federal governments continue to lose human capital and funding.

In addition to this annual meeting and state wildlife grant oversight, the Service maintains active involvement in Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan implementation through Service biologist Mike Redmer's participation in the Illinois Fish and Wildlife Action Team.

--John Rogner, R3-Chicago



Left: A map of "Conservation Opportunity Areas" as identified by the Illinois State Fish & Wildlife Action Plan. Working together within and around these "COA's" was a major focus of the meeting. Map by Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

On day two of the meeting, participants were

Noteworthy

Upper Miss Swan Watch A Big Hit

A bus full of enthusiastic bird watchers made the trip to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge to view migrating tundra swans with tour guides Dave Palmquist of Whitewater State Park and Edward Lagace Winona District Park Ranger. There was good and there was bad that went hand and hand. The weather was biting cold as northwest winds gusting up to 35 miles per hour caused us to shiver in our tracks, but it was good for swan watching.

be seen floating, swimming, landing and taking off.

The area was alive with migrating waterfowl actively honking,



quaking along with a hundred or so bald eagles. Volunteers from the Friends of Upper Miss Refuges assisted with volunteers at the Brownsville new observation deck. They provided hot drinks and snacks while sharing their knowledge of the birds and the refuge. Every one had a great time making new friends. We learned a little more about our beautiful National River Refuge that enables migrating waterfowl to have a safe and healthy trip to their winter feeding grounds.

--Edward Lagace Park Ranger
Upper Miss Winona District



his equipment to accommodate for their specific disability. He recalled one moment when a physically disabled girl shot her first bow and arrow. "The smile on her face only matched the smile of her parents."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Program benefits not only wildlife, but people as well. We would like to say thank you to the entire bowhunting and archery community for contributing to the future of outdoor recreation and ensuring the future of so many wildlife species. Thank you.

If you would like to see how much federal funding is going to wildlife restoration and hunter education in your state, visit <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/WR/WRFinalApportionment2008.pdf>

Or, you can check out a new interactive presentation that explains how excise taxes on bowhunting and archery equipment are being spent across the nation. To view the presentation, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/FederalAid/Powerpoint/WildlifeRestoration.ppt>

For more information about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, visit <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/WR/WR.htm>.

--Ashley Spratt
External Affairs

Archery

Continued from page Dirk Studebaker is the Hunter Education Coordinator for Indiana. Dirk described to me how he has seen archery transform the lives of children who have otherwise not had many opportunities for outdoor recreation. Some of the students Dirk works with are physically disabled, and he adapts



The tour included a stop at Weaver Bottoms (Winona District) near Weaver, Minn. Bird watchers viewed swans on the water with more arriving every moment. The opportunity to observe many species of ducks and geese diving alongside the swans made it especially exciting. We all loaded back on the bus and a hearty lunch was shared by all. As the bus approached the new overlook completed this year there were many thousands of tundra swans to

Noteworthy

TCFO completes 5-Year review of western prairie fringed orchid status

On December 5, 2008, the Service's Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office (TCFO) completed its 5-year review of the status of the western prairie fringed orchid. The orchid inhabits remnants of tallgrass prairie from extreme southern Manitoba to Missouri and Kansas and is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a result of this review, TCFO has recommended that the orchid remain federally threatened due to unresolved threats to the species, a few of which have arisen since the species was listed in 1989. In addition, TCFO has recommended several actions that should be taken to advance the conservation of this species and plans to work with the other Service offices, the recovery team, and other partners to refine and implement this list of actions.

-- Phil Delphey

Wilderness Continued from page nine.

EA: How are you encouraging implementation? Are there any accountability measures or metrics involved with the action plan? Is there any legislation behind implementation of the vision?

Rogner: Implementation of the Green Infrastructure Vision is very complex because it will depend on everyone who is in a position to make or influence land use decisions. The first part of the implementation strategy will be an awareness campaign that will target two distinct groups. The first is local officials, policy-makers, corporate executives, and other land

use professionals who make decisions about land use and the built environment. The second group is families and the media. By targeting this second group we hope to raise awareness of how nature is critical to human welfare, that there is a direct linkage between healthy fish and wildlife habitats and human health.

A second implementation strategy will involve working with our 230 member organizations to directly engage regional and local government officials and design professionals. An example of this is already underway. A group of CW member organizations is working with the regional land use and transportation planning agency (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning) to promote the integration of the Green Infrastructure Vision into the 2040 Land Use and Transportation Plan. This will help guide the hundreds of local units of government who will then step down the regional plan into their own comprehensive plans and hopefully ensure the fair consideration of green infrastructure into local land use decisions.

Success metrics include the increase in local conservation design ordinances, local nature protection plans, number of conservation developments, acres of open space, area of natural landscaping, and opportunities for unstructured play by children outdoors.

The vision as a whole does not require legislation, but its widespread implementation will require the translation of the vision into zoning and conservation design ordinances by many units of local government.

EA: What actions would you advise people to take in order to start up a similar project? Are there any specific projects in the vision that you would single out?

Rogner: This project is intended to promote the integration of nature and

wildlife into the places where people live and make natural experiences part of everyday life. It cannot happen through a regulatory approach and must be done by selling a vision of community health, welfare, and quality of life. It requires a core partnership with a shared conservation passion, a commitment to work together, political ties, strong connections with the broader civic community, technical skills, and communication strategies that can link conservation with people's core values. These are all elements that ought to be considered in any conservation land use planning effort.

The elements of the vision include both conventional land protection similar to what we have in our National Wildlife Refuge System as well as conservation design for new developments. Of the two, I am most interested in the conservation design aspects because we have not yet done this on a scale where we can demonstrate real conservation benefits and which is broadly acceptable to urban and suburban residents. It is largely a task of building acceptance into people's minds.

EA: The forum is a 30 member alliance. Who are some of the other partners that you worked with?

Rogner: In addition to working with our local representatives to the forum, many Chicago Wilderness member organizations contributed along with the Service to the vision and the proposal to the Forum. Most notable are the Field Museum, all of the local county forest preserve districts, Brookfield Zoo, Illinois DNR, Openlands Project, The Nature Conservancy, the former Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, the Chicago Wilderness Corporate Council, and Chicago Wilderness staff.



Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting

More than 100 sturgeon scientists and enthusiasts from across the Great Lakes basin came together on December 3-4 on the shore of the St. Claire River in Port Huron, Mich. for the 4th Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a forum to foster communication and exchange of information among all interested groups relating to the study, management and restoration of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes basin and to address emerging issues.

Participants came from more than 35 different federal, state, provincial and tribal natural resources agencies along with non-government organizations, companies and academia.

The focus topic of this recent meeting was management planning, a process that many agencies have been and are becoming more engaged in at various levels and with varying success.

The two-day meeting incorporated a variety of opportunities to share and learn about current lake sturgeon rehabilitation efforts and issues. There were also discussions on management planning ideas. There was a mix of 17 oral and 18 poster and display presentations on a variety of topics including management initiatives, rehabilitation tools and efforts and new research findings. There were three breakout group discussion sessions that considered the ecological, cultural, social, economic and ecological

role of lake sturgeon. There was a panel discussion on the status designations of this species across the region; a lunch presentation on examples of underwater video support for sturgeon research and education in the St. Claire/Detroit River corridor; and an evening social and presentation exhibit.



Above: Poster session at the 2008 Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting. Photo by Jim Boase,

These meetings have been held biennially since 2002 and are organized by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) staff from each of the Great Lakes National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (NFWCO) including Rob Elliott (Green Bay), Jim Boase and Angie Bowen (Alpena), Betsy Trometer and Chris Castiglione (Lower Lakes, Region 5), and Henry Quinlan (Ashland). Also lending assistance was a steering committee of partner agency and organization

representatives including Lloyd Mohr and Tim Haxton (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources), Tom Pratt (Department of Fisheries and Oceans - Canada), Nancy Auer (Michigan Tech Univ.), Ed Baker (Michigan Department of Natural Resources), Mike Donofrio (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources), Marty Holtgren (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians), and Dawn Dittman (U.S. Geological Survey). Funding for these meetings has been provided by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust.

Proceedings from this meeting are available on the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon website and will include the presentations and posters presented during the meeting as well as abstracts, participant biographical information and breakout group discussion results.

Proceedings from previous meetings as well as a wealth of information from many sturgeon biologists, researchers and organizations are also available on the website at: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/sturgeon/>.

--Rob Elliott
Green Bay NFWCO

Planes Cranes and Automobiles

14 Ultralight-led Whooping Cranes Arrive In Their Wintering Homes

Three months ago, fourteen yearling whooping cranes departed from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin for their first 1,200 mile journey across the skies of the middle and eastern United States. Half of the flock was destined for St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, and the other half destined for Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, both located on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

So what makes this migration different from that of any other migratory bird? The answer is two fold: their ultralight-aircraft chaperones, and their status as an endangered species.

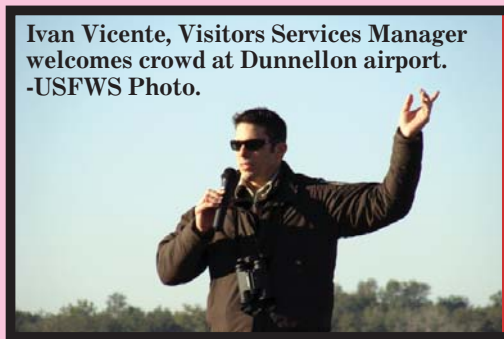
Since 2001, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), an international coalition of public and private agencies and organizations, has been working to establish a self-sustaining migratory population of whooping cranes in the Eastern United States. Whooping cranes (commonly known as “whoopers” for their loud and penetrating unison calls) were on the verge of extinction due to hunting and habitat loss in the 1940s, and were listed as federally endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 1967. Pilots from Operation Migration - a WCEP partner- have been leading flocks of captive-reared whooping cranes south from their summer home in Wisconsin to their wintering location in Florida.

To increase awareness for the project and highlight the recovery efforts of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, the public is given opportunities along the migration route to see the ultralights and birds in flight.

On the morning of January 17, thousands of onlookers - some locals

from the towns surrounding St. Marks, others craniacs from across the nation - crowded the town of St. Marks to witness for the first time, seven whooping cranes flying behind four ultralight aircraft as they closed in on their final destination. Terry Peacock, St. Marks

Ivan Vicente, Visitors Services Manager welcomes crowd at Dunnellon airport. -USFWS Photo.



National Wildlife Refuge Manager, said the outpouring of support in preparing for the cranes' arrival was remarkable. “People had never seen anything like it,” she said. One of the oldest refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System,

Seven whooping cranes in flight over St. Marks. -USFWS Photo.



More than 2000 attended the fly over at St. Marks. -USFWS Photo.



St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge covers 70,000 acres and more than 60 miles of coastline in Wakulla, Jefferson and Taylor counties along the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida. Joan Garland, Co-Chair of the WCEP Outreach Teams, said WCEP's decision to split the flock was because of the loss in February 2007 of 17 of the 18 Class of 2006 whooping cranes in a severe storm at Chassahowitzka NWR. “WCEP hopes the two wintering locations will help reduce the risk of another catastrophic loss,” Garland said.

Just a few days later on January 22, I was able to experience the cranes flying behind planes firsthand. This group of seven cranes were destined for Chassahowitzka NWR. I stood outside the hangar at Dunnellon Airport at 7:00 a.m., and watched the headlights of cars beaming through the mist as they headed down the driveway. By 8:00 a.m. the parking lot was full. Despite an unusually frigid Florida morning, several hundred people turned out for the flyover event, as it would be one of the last opportunities to see the migration caravan of planes and cranes up close. Around 9:00 a.m., a voice came over the loudspeaker. “The cranes are approaching!”

Cheers and claps drowned out the loud speaker and binoculars, cameras and video camcorders all jumped out of their cases in a matter of seconds. It took a few minutes before the cranes and planes were visible to the naked eye, but once they were spotted,

Planes Cranes and Automobiles

14 Ultralight-led Whooping Cranes Arrive In Their Wintering Homes

all eyes, ears and pointing fingers faced in their direction.

I squinted to make out the triangular shape of the lead ultralight, manned by Brooke Pennypacker, one of OM's pilots. Soon after I spotted the ultralight, I saw a thin white string following closely behind on one wing. It was not until the caravan closed in on the airport could you discern that the thin white string was actually a flock of cranes. And not just any cranes: endangered whooping cranes. The birds glided in a perfect line behind the left wing of the aircraft, barely flapping a wing.

Brooke circled the crowd overhead... once... and then a second time. The birds were in view for around 10-15 minutes, before Brooke headed directly into the sun, and off to the Halpata pen site, where the birds and crew would rest in preparation for their final leg to Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge the following morning. As the birds and Brooke cleared the treetops and flew out of sight, two of the other ultralight aircraft came in for a landing at the Dunnellon airport. The pilots parked their planes in front the crowd of people that had gathered to shake their hands.

With the completion of Migration 2008 in sight, the Whooping Cranes Eastern Partnership could breathe a sigh of relief. But still with one leg of the migration left, a short 26 miles from Halpata to Chassahowitzka, preparations still needed to be made at Chassahowitzka NWR.

I visited the pensite at Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge on January 23, the day the flock of seven arrived. Sara Zimorski, who works for the International Crane Foundation, and is a member of the WCEP Tracking Team, guided

Joan and I through the salt water marsh on Florida's Gulf Coast to reach the pen location inside the refuge. We traveled by car, by airboat, and by foot to reach the



Whooping crane at International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis. -USFWS Photo.

pensite, which is located in an isolated section of the refuge. "It's important that the birds do not get accustomed to humans," Sara explained. In fact, the cranes never see a human face, or hand, or leg. That's because WCEP researchers, and even OM's pilots, all wear crane costumes when they handle or are around the cranes. Once we reached the camouflage colored blind, we were outfitted with our own crane costumes, which resemble bee keeper suits, and come equipped with a crane neck and head that takes the place of our human hands.

Sara will check on the birds twice a day through the wintering period, in the morning and in the afternoon. Her WCEP Tracking Team partner, Richard Urbanek, who is a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, takes the evening shift. "This is one of the most intensely monitored populations of crane in the world," Richard told me.

After suiting up and being instructed on pensite protocol, we walked silently toward the pens. This is the first afternoon the birds have spent at the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, and we are anxious to observe their

behavior. Sara checks the water level and food, while Joan and I watch as some of the cranes curiously approach. The birds are provided with "crane pellets" but also forage for snails, oysters, and other food on their own. I watch motionless, as one of the larger birds stands tall and stretches his long neck upwards. Sara raises the crane head from her costumer higher than that of the approaching bird's, and he backs away. After we left the pens, Sara explained that this behavior is how the birds display dominance. One of the smaller cranes picks at a snail, tossing it in the air before it drops to the ground, and the cycle is repeated. The birds will stay in these top-netted pens until health checks are completed, which will be within just a few days. Then they will be released into a larger, 4-acre pen and will be free to fly and forage outside of the pen, but Sara explains that most stay nearby.

WCEP History

In 2001, project partner Operation Migration's pilots led the first whooping crane chicks, conditioned to follow their ultralight aircraft surrogates, south from Necedah NWR to Chassahowitzka NWR. Each subsequent year, WCEP biologists and pilots have conditioned and guided additional groups of juvenile cranes to Chassahowitzka NWR. Having been shown the way once, the young birds self initiate their return migration in the spring, and in subsequent years, continue to migrate on their own.

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

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

--Ashley Spratt, *External Affairs*

Management Diversity Training with Good Eats

February is Black History Month.

The Fort Snelling Black Historical Society seeks to raise awareness of the contributions of African Americans, their sacrifices, and the challenges they have faced and continue to overcome. For Black History Month this year, the Society has scheduled two key events.

The first event will be the "Annual Soul Food Experience" luncheon on February 17, 2009, in Conference Room G-108 at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The "Annual Soul Food Experience" luncheon is open and free to all. Monetary donations will gladly be accepted to help support the Fort Snelling Black Historical Society. We encourage you not only to attend the luncheon, but to participate by preparing a traditional soul food dish. If you are interested in preparing a soul food dish for others to enjoy, please contact Chet Goree at the Department of Veterans Affairs. He can be reached by e-mail at chet.goree@va.gov. Additional reference material (history of soul food and recipes) can be obtained from Kathleen Schlener, employee in Human Capital, by telephone at (612) 713-5232 or by e-mail at kathleen_schlener@fws.gov.

The second event will be a guest speaker, Mr. Calvin Walker, who among other things, will speak on identity, the loss associated with assimilation, and the effects it

creates. Mr. Walker's presentation will be on February 18, 2009, in the Main Auditorium (G-110) at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building between 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

By attending this special speaking engagement, managers and supervisors can receive credit for completing two hours of Equal Employment Opportunity and/or Diversity training for Fiscal Year 2009.

Also available this year is a PBS four-part series on DVD entitled, "African American Lives 2" that includes four one-hour episodes on African American History. More specifically, it is an exploration of African American lives. "African American Lives 2" was written, and is hosted by, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, as well as director of the William Edward Burghardt Du Bois Institute for African American Studies. The four-part series draws upon DNA analysis, genealogical research, and family oral tradition to trace the lineages of the participants, including Maya Angelou, Morgan Freeman, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, and Tina Turner, down through U.S. History and back to Africa. Each episode is thought provoking. The four-part series could be beneficial to each of us as we all celebrate Black History Month.

For each one-hour episode, the Regional Director's Conference has been reserved on the following days:

Episode 1: "The Road Home": Episode One focuses on the stories of the participants' ancestors from the early 20th century. Wednesday, February 4th - 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Episode 2: "A Way Out of No Way": Episode Two continues to trace the guests' lineages back through the late 1800s to the Civil War. Wednesday, February 11th - 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Episode 3: "We Come from People": Episode Three reveals stories of participants' ancestors during the early years of the United States. Tuesday, February 17th - 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Episode 4: "The Past Is Another Country": Episode Four presents fascinating discoveries about participants' lineages thanks to DNA analysis. Tuesday, February 24th - 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

For each one-hour episode viewed, managers and supervisors are eligible to receive one hour of credit towards completion of their Equal Employment Opportunity and/or Diversity training for Fiscal Year 2009. For more information contact Marc Gunby by telephone at (612) 713-5294 or by e-mail at marc_gunby@fws.gov.

--Marc Gunby, Diversity
Manager

Around the Region

Celebrating Excellence



Left: Staff from Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge were asked to teach students at St. Mary's University (SMU) how to teach high school students how to use GPS units. Lauren Mess, SMU education major, teachers her group of ALC high-schoolers how to use a GPS unit.

Above: 5th grade students in the Prairie Science Class monitor meter plots in partners, searching for forb species as part of a research study.
- USFWS Photo by Michelle Tice, Student Conservation Association Intern

USFWS Teams with University

Students in the "Environmental Science" course at the Dakota County Community College in Rosemount, Minnesota, have been treated to a variety of guest speakers from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On November 18, Annette Trowbridge, an Environmental Contaminants Biologist from the Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office, provided an overview of how contaminants in the environment can adversely affect natural resources and provided examples illustrating how the principles of environmental health and ecotoxicology are applied to natural resource management in Minnesota.

MLK Food Drive

In honor of Dr. King and his dedication to the community, the Diversity Council of the Federal Executive Board is asking for your support of this year's annual food drive. The drive will be conducted from January 12, 2009, through February 12, 2009. The Second Harvest Food Bank has again been designated to receive the donations. Food will be divided between the St. Paul and Minneapolis warehouses. In this way both cities will reap the "harvest" of our endeavors. Checks should be made payable to "Second Harvest." If your agency is outside of the Twin Cities, you may hold a food drive and donate the food locally. A box for donations is in the security lobby of the Fort Snelling BHW Federal building. Your support of the activities sponsored by the Diversity Council is greatly appreciated. For additional information, please call Steve Campos at 612-889-9727 (steven.campos@mn.ngb.army.mil) or Chrystine Faucher at 612-349-4961 (Chrystine.M.Faucher@usps.gov).



Happy Valentine's Day



Quotes of the Month

Each new year is a surprise to us.

We find that we had virtually forgotten the note of each bird,

and when we hear it again, it is remembered like a dream, reminding us of a previous state of existence...

The voice of nature is always encouraging. ~HENRY DAVID THOREAU

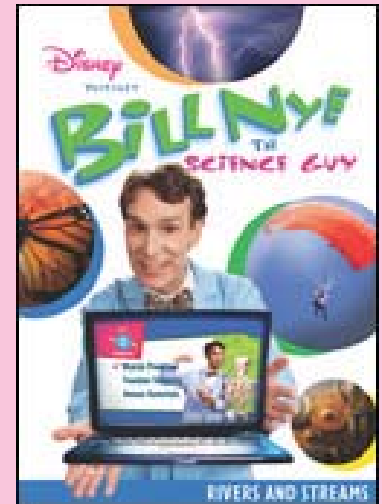
February Films from the Region 3 Resource Center

Winter is a great time to enhance training or lunchtime with films from the Resource Center collections. With about 800 films available, there is certainly something for everyone.

If you missed seeing the Discovery Channel's Planet Earth series you can check out the complete collection from the Resource Center. You can also review the Service mission in

America's National Wildlife Refuge System: Where Wildlife Comes First, or you can add some spice to your next educational workshop with Rivers & Streams featuring Bill Nye, the Science Guy. Most films are available in VHS or DVD formats and many of the newest educational films are available with a Spanish language option. You may request video catalogues for General, In-Service, and Safety collections from Judy_Geck@fws.gov.

--Judy Geck
Region 3 Resource Librarian



Silent Auction Gives Big!

The silent auction held over the holiday raised \$1286.25! Amazing!! Law Enforcement met with a Second Harvest Heartland representative and presented them with proceeds on behalf of all of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) employees in the Midwest Region. We received a thank you letter from Second Harvest Heartland. Your donation provided 5149 meals for those less fortunate.

To those who donated items, assisted with set up or take down, placed bids and purchased goods, or helped us in any other way -- you know who you are -- we extend our sincere thanks. This event thrives each year because it is well-supported by caring people. It is hard to believe that this was our 8th Silent Auction! As we set our sights on next year, we look forward to your

participation as we all work together raising money to assist others in need.

Training and Resources

The 11th Anniversary 2009 State-Fish Art Contest

Start your Fish Art! Students in grades 4-12 are eligible to win scholarships, art supplies & fishing gear. Students across the United States have the opportunity to win recognition and prizes while learning about state-fish species, aquatic habitats, and conservation. The Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest uses art to catch the imagination of youth while teaching fisheries conservation. Entries must be postmarked by March 31, 2009. Winners will be announced May 1,

2009. The 11th Annual Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest is open to all students in grades 4 through 12. To enter, young artists nationwide must create an illustration of their chosen state-fish. A written composition on its behavior, habitat, and conservation is also required.

Educators and Parents: Visit the State-Fish Art website at www.statefishart.com for complete details, contest entry forms and to download the free *Something's Fishy* lesson plan. For more information contact Pat Conzemius at Wildlife Forever, 2700 Freeway Blvd., #1000, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430, by e-mail at pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org or call (763) 253-022. --Courtesy of the January Edition of the Visitor Services Update for Region 3 --Kenneth A. Garrahan, Visitor Services Manager

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