



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Inside Region 3

## *January 2008*

***Inside This Issue:***  
***Fifty Years of Saving Wetlands***  
***Whooping Cranes Take Flight***  
***Ice Rescue***  
***Evenings with Leopold***

## Departments

The RD's Corner /3

Let's Go Outside /12

Mark Your Calendar /11

Around the Region /13

Our People /10

Quote of the Month /14

## Features

### **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](mailto:valerie_redmond@fws.gov).

### **On the cover:**

Frost covers the landscape on a recent morning at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge in northern Minnesota.



### **Whooping Cranes Take To the Sky /6**

*Birds Take Flight*

By Rachel F. Levin



### **Ice Rescue /4**

*Savanna District Staffers Help Rescue Stranded Ice Fisherman*

By Chuck Traxler



### **Evenings with Leopold /12**

*A Childhood Recount on the Importance of Nature*

By Tex Hawkins



### **The Small Wetlands Program /8**

*A Half Century of Conserving Prairie Habitat*

By Chuck Traxler



# Conservation Heroes

This year is an exciting time to be in the Region 3 family. In addition to our sustained good work, in 2008 we will host several high-profile events, including the Federal Duck Stamp contest in October and the Service Directorate Meeting this summer. These forums and many others help us be visible leaders in conservation and (with appropriate Midwest modesty) show off our good work! Our big year started off with a busy January.

Pheasant Fest 2008 launched a year of events to showcase grassland and wetland conservation by Pheasants Forever and partners. Numerous FWS employees contributed to the festivities, and Director Dale Hall gave the keynote luncheon address to more than a thousand attendees. His remarks thanked our partners and his presence highlighted the Service's role in these shared efforts.

And during a visit to Chicago Dale detoured to spend some time with more than twenty members of the Conservation Planning Assistance group from throughout Region 3, the first time this vital group of professionals has held a convocation. I wish he also could have visited the 50 employees and partners who gathered in LaCrosse this month

to “test drive” Strategic Habitat Conservation. Their efforts will guide our way forward to best apply ourselves to landscape-level accomplishments.

We also had the opportunity to outreach to staff members from Minnesota Congressman Keith



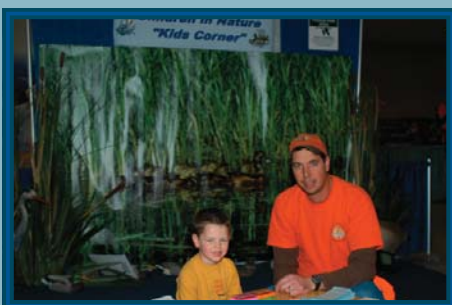
And before he departed, Dale gave Teresa Woods the personal token that he selectively bestows in his travels and visits, a FWS belt buckle. His gift honors her quiet and outstanding leadership in science, landscape conservation and structured decision-making.

Those are just a few highlights of the first month of 2008 -- what a start to a new year! Some of these events are landmarks, but we make our best marks by sustained excellence every day. These are more than celebrations, gatherings, awards or events, for that I am most grateful – thank you.

Robyn Thorson

Ellison's local office, discussing resource issues related to his district, the nation and the planet. In this election year it is exciting to see elected officials focus on natural resources, and I encourage us to look for every opportunity to help them become “conservation heroes.”

Speaking of heroes, earlier this month we were privileged to have the Director visit the RO and participate in recognition of a person who exemplifies everything heroic and good about the Service and Region 3: Nita Fuller. Nita exudes the conservation ethic, keeping her focus on natural resource issues while placing our most important asset—our people—in the forefront. Dale presented Nita the Department of the Interior's Meritorious Service Award, signed by the Secretary.



Top: RD Robyn Thorson. Right: Sharon Hepper and Director H. Dale Hall. Top Left: Tim Patronski, Fisheries, and Mara Koenig from Minnesota Valley NWR. Bottom Left: Father and son enjoying the Children and Nature display at Pheasant Fest 2008.

# Savanna District Staffers Help Rescue Stranded Ice Fisherman

On Dec. 13, at approximately 7am, two men launched a small hovercraft into the backwaters of the Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge – Savanna District. The men were venturing onto the ice and water for a day of ice fishing. While driving their hovercraft on the ice in a backwater area on the Refuge’s Lost Mound Unit, one side of the hovercraft’s flotation device sprang a leak and deflated. The unbalanced craft overturned and threw both men into the Mississippi River’s icy water.

Now in the water, the men were unable to upright the hovercraft and the overturned craft was too small for both men to climb onto. Eventually the men were able to cling onto the sides of the

craft but had to keep their bodies in the freezing water.

The older of the two men, 77, decided he would attempt to swim to shore so the other man, his 37-year old great-nephew, could climb out of the water and lay on top of the overturned hovercraft and await rescue. It appears the man was not able to cross the 200 yards of ice and open water to get onto shore. The younger man reported the older man disappeared from sight shortly after he began swimming for shore. A body has not yet been recovered.

The wife of one of the fishermen reported them missing at approximately 7 p.m. that evening. Savanna District Refuge Specialist Russel Engelke and

Refuge LE officer Darryn Witt were among those called to help look for the missing men. Using a refuge airboat, Engelke and Witt found the overturned hovercraft at approximately 10:30 p.m.

The man who stayed with the hovercraft had managed to pull himself on top of the overturned craft and waiting nearly 15 hours for rescue. The man had removed his wet boots, gloves, hat and insulated outerwear so that he could climb out of the water to get on top of the hovercraft to dry out. Daytime temperatures only reached about 25 degrees Fahrenheit and had dropped to 17 degrees by the time he was found.

The man was airlifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Luckily

the man had no frost bite and after only five days in the hospital was released. Although this accident was a tragedy, luckily some dedicated refuge employees were available to help save his life.

*--Ed Britton,  
Savanna Dist.  
Upper Miss.  
NWFR*



FWS employees help with rescue.



# Connecting People with Nature

## A Little Bit of Butterfly Respect

It seems unlikely that an organization filled with employees dedicated to the conservation, protection and enhancement of this country's natural resources could be disconnected from nature. Right? Wrong! The employees of the US Fish and Wildlife Service are just as susceptible to the distractions of modern society. Our busy lives put us at risk of being disconnected from nature in our personal lives. This observation was discussed at a meeting I recently attended during the Connecting People with Nature Workshop at NCTC in December of 2007. Out of the discussion, a presumably excellent idea surfaced. Why not provide a forum for Service staff to share the ways in which they and their families and friends connect with nature in their personal lives? What are their challenges? How do they succeed? Robyn must have thought it was a good idea too, since she invited us to submit our stories in the December issue of Inside Region 3. I decided to take Robyn up on her invitation.

One day late last summer I came home. When I walked in the door my daughter Jill, seven years old at the time, began pulling me into her bedroom to see something very exciting. In her room was a collapsible mesh tube standing three feet tall filled with several fresh milk weed sprigs and various other weeds and leaves. Upon closer inspection, I saw it, monarch butterfly larvae, five of them. During a routine gas well inspection, my wife, the geologist, had discovered the caterpillars in a field area destined to be disturbed for a natural gas well installation. Of course, she could not leave these animals to fend for themselves. So, my wonderful, kind hearted wife rescued the helpless caterpillars. Then together, mother and daughter built the temporary habitat that I was literally dragged in to see. As luck and skill would have it, the critters survived the ordeal. Sometime during mid fall all but one of the monarch

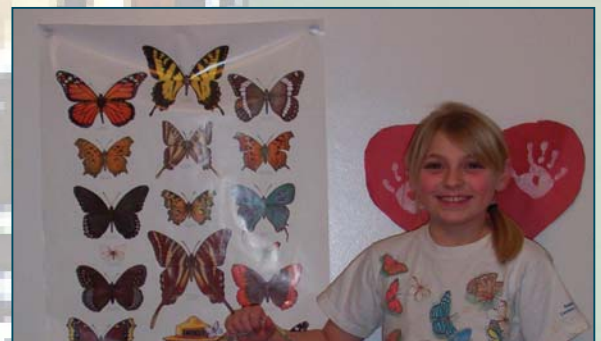
butterflies successfully emerged. For many weeks that bedroom was a "fluttertorium". Jill's new found friends were in the best of hands, often landing on her fingers. Janet and Jill educated themselves "fully" on the needs of these animals. I witnessed them on many occasions feeding nectar to the butterflies off an eye dropper. They were just so proud of their efforts.

While "wallowing" in their success, Jill and Janet came to the realization that the butterflies needed to be freed to migrate to a warmer climate. Of course, by the time they came to this realization it was quite cold in northern Michigan. Certainly, they were not going to release the butterflies around here! So, with gas at three bucks a gallon, my wife packed up the kids, and the butterflies and she headed south--not to Mexico, fortunately, but to south east Michigan, about 275 miles from our home. As it turned out, the weekend forecast was for much warmer weather down there. I didn't know if I should be thrilled that my family was so into this ingenious plot or if I should send them to some kind of therapy! Anyway, I was not there to see it, I had to work that weekend. But, I guess in some ceremonial fashion, the butterflies were released in a park near Rochester, Michigan on a warm sunny day. My family returned home with a great lifelong memory and for sure, another experience connecting them with nature.

-Tim Smigielski,  
Jordan River NHF



Below: Jill Smigielski (age 8, Elmira, Michigan) in her "Fluttertorium" soon after the release of her Monarch butterflies.





## Our People

# Seventeen Endangered Whooping Cranes Take to the Sky on Ultralight-guided Flight to Florida

Seventeen young whooping cranes began their ultralight-led migration from central Wisconsin's Necedah National Wildlife Refuge on Oct. 13.

This is the seventh group of birds to take part in a landmark project led by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), which is reintroducing this highly imperiled species in eastern North America. There are now 52 whooping cranes in the wild in eastern North America thanks to WCEP's efforts. The Fish and Wildlife Service is a founding partner in WCEP.

Four ultralight aircraft and the juvenile cranes took to the air for the 1,250-mile journey to the birds' wintering habitat at Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge along Florida's Gulf Coast. As of press time, the birds were in Hamilton County, Florida.

Biologists from the International Crane Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reared 27 whooping cranes at Necedah NWR this summer. In addition to the 17 birds being led south by ultralights, 10 other birds have been released in the company of older cranes in hopes that the young whooping cranes learn the migration route.

Whooping cranes that take part in the reintroductions are hatched at the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md., and at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis.

Each year since 2001, ultralight pilots of project partner Operation Migration have conditioned and led juvenile whooping cranes to follow their aircraft on their first migration south.

Graduated classes of whooping cranes spend the summer in central Wisconsin, where they use areas on or near Necedah NWR, as well as various state and private lands. One whooping crane,

number 7-01, returns to Horicon NWR each summer.

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 ground.

Whooping cranes were on the verge of extinction in the 1940s. Today, there are only about 350 of them in the wild.

For more information on WCEP and a link to daily migration reports, go to <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org>.

--Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs



Above: The "Class of 2007" is the seventh group of whooping cranes to learn the Wisconsin-to-Florida migration route from ultralight pilots. WCEP photo.



Ultralight-led migration in flight.

# The World's Largest Reintroduction?

Thousands of the endangered Higgins eye pearlymussels were returned to the Mississippi River Basin in what was perhaps the largest single reintroduction of an endangered species since the inception of the federal Endangered Species Act.

Biologists placed more than 8,600 two- and three-year-old mussels in the Rock River and Pool 16 of the Upper Mississippi River mainstem after being raised in mussel rearing cages in Pool 4 of the er. The mussels will be sleeping in a new "bed," so to speak, as it is hoped that they acclimate to their new surroundings and begin producing young on their own in the next one to three years. These locations were selected as release sites after careful examination to ensure that invasive zebra mussel colonization at the sites were low enough to not cause complications with recovery efforts.

The Higgins eye pearlymussel was listed as an endangered species in 1976 because of loss and degradation of its river habitat. With the invasion of the destructive zebra mussel, the Higgins eye's survival became even more precarious; the colonization of non-native zebra mussels directly on native mussel beds interferes with normal native mussel feeding, respiration and reproduction.

This multi-agency mussel propagation effort began in 1999, and has produced more than 30,000 Higgins eye mussels to ensure the species' survival. The mussels are being propagated in hopes of creating five naturally reproducing populations made of multiple year-classes. Although still in the early stages of success, the latest stockings hold out hope that recovery for this species has at least past the tipping point and is now heading in a positive direction.

Native mussels are an important part of the ecosystem, supplying food, bottom stabilization and even water purification by filtering water through their

imperiled by various federal and state fish and wildlife agencies and concerned conservation groups.



respiration and feeding processes. The Upper Mississippi River Basin still holds one of the most diverse mussel populations in the world, though more than 50 percent have experienced declines rangewide or are listed as

Above left: Native mussels such as the Higgins eye pearly mussel are key to maintaining healthy ecosystems. FWS photo.



# Small Wetlands Program

## *A Half Century of Conserving Prairie Habitat*

Before attempting to explain all the legislative, programmatic and funding details of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Small Wetlands Program, here's what you need to know about the most effective conservation program you've likely never heard of: the Small Wetlands

confusing legislative history, its funding comes from multiple sources, and numerous Service programs play a role in its operation.

In addition to the complicated bureaucracy above the program,

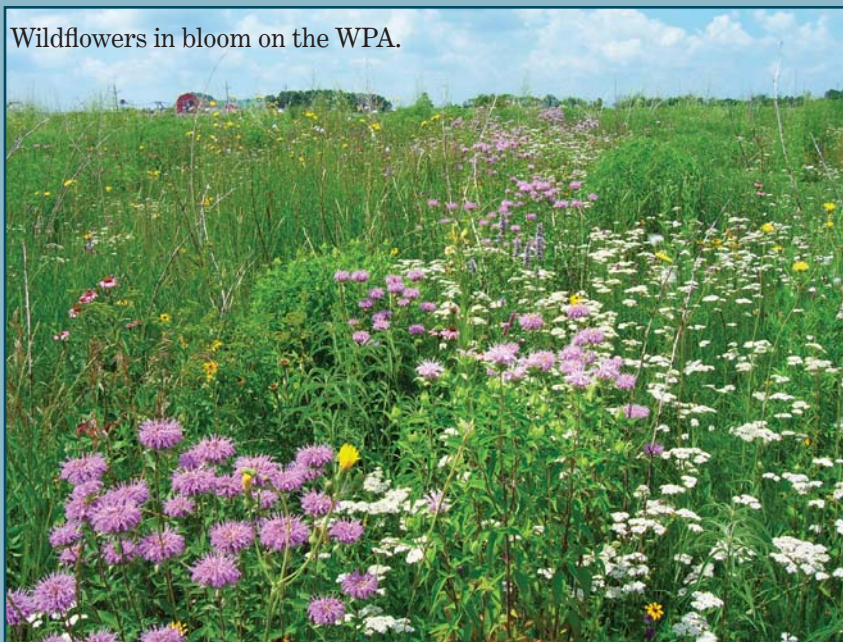
Stream magazine titled "Good-By Pot-Holes," Clay Schoenfeld brought the plight of waterfowl and the loss of wetlands to the attention of the rest of America. As a result of this raised awareness, Congress acted to permanently protect waterfowl habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region, which encompasses lands in the upper Midwest.

Congress officially created the Small Wetland Program on Aug. 1, 1958, by amending the 1934 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (commonly referred to as the Duck Stamp Act) to allow proceeds from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps to be used to protect waterfowl habitat. The habitat protected through the Small Wetland Program consists of small wetlands, and surrounding grassland habitat, primarily in the U.S. portion of the Prairie Pothole Region. These areas, protected in perpetuity through fee-title acquisition or easement, are called waterfowl production areas (WPA).

Beginning in the late 1950s, Service realty specialists began crisscrossing the Prairie Pothole Region working with willing landowners to protect remaining waterfowl habitat. In 1959, the Service acquired its first WPA, the McCarlson WPA in Day County, S.D. Congress recognized the success and understood the importance of the program, and in 1961 greatly increased the program's funding by approving the Wetland Loan Act.

### **Prairie Pothole Region**

The Prairie Pothole Region of North America was once the greatest expanse of grasslands and small wetlands on earth. The southern reach of the region is in central Iowa and it extends northwest through Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana and into Canada.



Wildflowers in bloom on the WPA.

Program uses funds from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps to permanently protect some of the most threatened and productive waterfowl habitat in the United States.

Since its creation 50 years ago, the program has protected nearly three million acres of habitat, mainly in the Prairie Pothole Region of the United States. These protected areas are called waterfowl production areas, and they are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

While the Small Wetlands Program is arguably one of the most effective and efficient conservation programs in the history of the United States, it is also a marketing nightmare. It has a complex and sometimes

the program itself includes many subsets. Waterfowl productions areas, wetland management districts, wetland acquisition offices, and habitat and population evaluation teams are just a few of components that keep this program running.

### **The History**

The impetus for developing the Small Wetland Program began in the 1940s when Waubay National Wildlife Refuge Manager Fred Staunton began documenting significant reductions in waterfowl populations. Staunton, and many others, believed these reductions were the direct result of massive wetland drainage programs across America's prairie.

In an April 1949 article in *Field &*



# Small Wetlands Program

## *A Half Century of Conserving Prairie Habitat*

Before a massive network of agricultural drain tiles were installed under the fertile soil, the area was covered with small wetlands called prairie potholes, created when glaciers advanced and retreated over the area. The original density of small wetlands across the region averaged an astonishing 83 wetland per square mile.

Because of these small -- often seasonal -- wetlands, and the grasslands associated with them, the Prairie Pothole Region is an ideal nursery for waterfowl and has long been called the “Duck Factory” of North America.



WPA signpost

Even today, with much of the wetlands and grasslands of the Midwest converted to agriculture, and just 2 percent of the land base part protected within the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Prairie Pothole Region still produces 50 percent of North America’s breeding waterfowl population.

### Waterfowl Production Areas

Waterfowl production areas are wetlands, and the surrounding uplands, that provide breeding, resting and nesting habitat for millions of waterfowl, shorebirds, grassland birds

and other wildlife. WPAs also protect native plants, provide habitat for resident and migratory wildlife, help filter groundwater, control runoff and flooding, and capture carbon from the atmosphere.

With more than 36,000 separate fee and permanent easement tracts covering nearly three million acres, waterfowl production areas account for 18 percent of National Wildlife Refuge System lands in the lower 48 states. Approximately 95 percent of these WPA lands are located within the Prairie Pothole states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana.

### Wetland Management Districts

To help effectively manage the increasing number of waterfowl production areas, in 1962 the Service created an administrative organization called a wetland management district (WMD). In addition to actively managing all the WPAs in a multi-county area, wetland management districts also work closely with the private landowners, government and nongovernment organizations, businesses and other federal agencies in their districts to improve wildlife habitat.

As part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, WPAs are generally subject to the same rules, regulations and requirements of a national wildlife refuge. “Basically we’ve got 244 refuges, with a more than 500 miles of border, spread across eight counties to manage,” says Morris Wetland Management District Manager Steve Delehanty. “The increased number of adjacent landowners can be a challenge, but it also really helps us develop working relationships with a large portion of the community, and this is an opportunity to work on conservation on a landscape scale.”

The most prominent difference between refuges and WPAs is that all fee-title owned WPAs are automatically open to hunting unless there is a reason, such as public safety, that hunting should not be allowed.

### The Future

While the Small Wetland Program is taking some time during its 50th anniversary celebration to reflect on all that has been accomplished, the main reason for celebrating is to raise awareness of the program and guide it toward another successful 50 years.

The Prairie Pothole Region continues to face many challenges today, just as it did in the 1940s. Wetlands are still being drained and grasslands are being plowed under. Increased grain prices and modern agricultural practices create incentives to put marginal farm land into agricultural production. Land prices have increased rapidly and because of this the Service is often unable to protect valuable wildlife habitat.

Despite this seemingly complicated program with complicated challenges, there’s one thing you really need to know. If you’re asking yourself, “How can I help make the Small Wetland Program a success during the next 50 years?,” the answer says it all: Buy a Federal Duck Stamp and tell all your friends to do the same. --*Chuck Traxler, External Affairs*

### Federal Assistance Name Change

Federal Aid has a new name: Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. The WSFR Program will be used on the new Web Page, the Strategic Plan, and other materials as they are developed. The R3 WSFR Program manages 350 grants to the States and Tribes totaling \$182 million dollars to protect and enhance fish, wildlife and habitat resources for present and future public benefit.

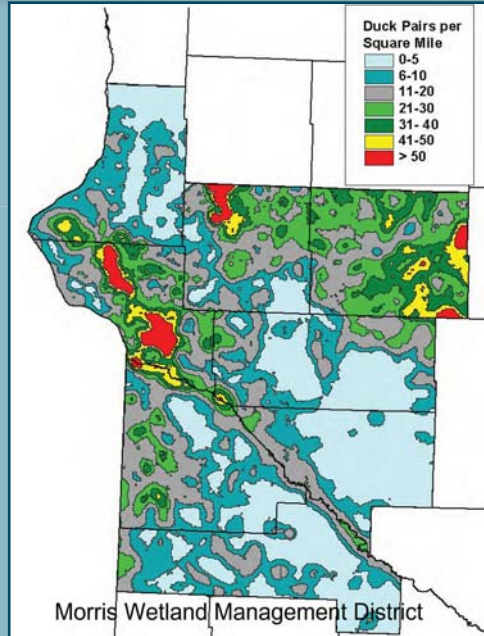
*Our People***Conservation Heroes**

Fifty years ago wildlife managers in the Prairie Pothole Region of the U.S. began to notice that waterfowl populations were decreasing rapidly. The reduction in waterfowl populations seemed to coincide with the rapid loss of wetlands and other waterfowl habitat which were being converted to agricultural uses to feed a hungry nation. In response to this, the Small Wetland Program was created in 1958 and uses funds from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps to permanently protect wetlands and grasslands across the Prairie Pothole Region.

Land managers also realized that that modern agriculture will always be critical aspect of the social and economic landscape of the prairie. Because of this, land managers have long been using science to prioritize their land protection efforts to provide the maximum benefits to wildlife.

Two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat and Population Evaluation Teams (HAPET) were created on the prairies, one in Fergus Falls, Minn., and the other in Bismark, N.D. The researchers at these stations use data collected from waterfowl populations surveys, satellites and aerial photos showing upland and wetland characteristics, and other sources to determine the value of land for waterfowl production.

Rex Johnson, director of the HAPET office in Fergus Falls, Minn., has a team of dedicated researchers, who take this complex data, analyze it, run models and create tools that wildlife managers can use. "We gather and collect all this data and use it to translate the complex science of the Prairie Pothole Region into easy to use forms like maps," said Johnson, "and provide them to federal, state and non-governmental wildlife managers across the continent."



Land Managers use predicted duck pair accessibility maps (also known as thunderstorm maps) such as this one of the Morris Wetland District to strategically protect habitat in the areas that will likely provide that greatest benefits for duck nesting.

On the ground, wildlife managers use the maps, fact sheets and models developed by HAPET to help them see the entire landscape, while still focusing on their local area.

"We have limited funds available to protect and restore habitat," says Morris Wetland Management District Manager Steve Delehanty. "This information allows us to apply our resources on the areas that will bring us the greatest benefits."

Thanks to the strategic vision and on-the-ground implementation of both the Small Wetlands Program and the Habitat and Population Evaluation Teams, the Service is doing all it can to strategically protect and restore the Prairie Pothole Region.

--Chuck Traxler  
*External Affairs*

*Meritorious Service*

LtoR: Nita Fuller, H. Dale Hall

For her excellence and outstanding contributions, Nita M. Fuller was granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior.

Fuller's career with the Service has spanned 30 years and has taken her from the mixed grass prairies of the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, to the subtropics of the Lower Rio Grande River National Wildlife Refuge, to the tallgrass prairies of the Midwest. She has had leadership posts at all levels of the National Wildlife Refuge System, from Refuge Manager to Deputy Chief of Refuges in Washington DC, to her present position as Regional Chief of Refuges in the Midwest Region.

Throughout her career, Ms. Fuller has advocated strong community and volunteer relationships, and has created a culture of collaborative management where volunteers, Friends groups, and Service staff at all levels work together to achieve Service mission and goals.



# The Multi-Generational Workforce: *Appreciating Different Approaches*

The Baby Boomers were born between 1945 and 1964. When I asked my fourteen year old what she thought about her grandparents' generation, her response was "They were at Woodstock! How cool is that?"

Yes, it's pretty cool. It's cool, because in my daughter's mind, Woodstock is indicative of social change. The sixties were a period of upheaval and chaos. The status quo was re-invented and more women entered the workforce than ever. How did the upheaval affect this generation? According to many experts, the events that affected the values of this generation were social protest; the rise of rock and roll; the civil rights movement; television and charismatic leadership.

How have these values translated into a workplace ethic?

### ***They are competitive.***

Because of their sheer numbers, the current 76 million Baby Boomers have always had to compete fiercely among themselves for jobs and promotions. Baby Boomers are generally perceived to have made sacrifices for the enhancement of their careers. This generation represents the first large segment of women in the population to pursue both a college education and a full time career. Because of the social changes brought about by the Civil Rights and Women's Movements, more individuals than ever before were equipped with the skills and education to compete in the workplace.

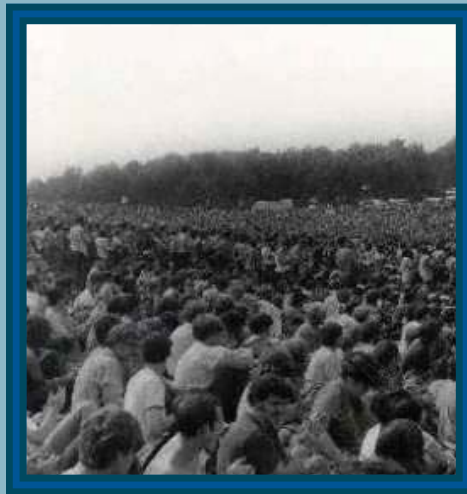
### ***They are optimistic.***

This generation tends to be optimistic about their prospects and that of the world in general. They matured in a time of unprecedented prosperity and social

activism. They witnessed firsthand their ability to change the framework of the nation and to create avenues of equity for themselves and others.

### ***They are "work-centric."***

Baby Boomers tend to define themselves through their work. They have been called the "TGIM" (Thank God It's



Monday) Generation. This generation is loyal to employers and many have been with the same organization throughout their career. This generation often defines itself according to its professional life. For instance, they are proud to note that they are the CEO of a company, the Director of Marketing, or the Chief Engineer. Workplace successes and accomplishments greatly influence their worldview and self-image.

### ***They value team work and consensus building.***

Personal relationships with coworkers are important to them, and they are good team builders. They lead by consensus and are generally described as a group motivated by dialogue, participation, and fairness. Educationally, they prefer to be in charge of their own learning, but will

work with groups to achieve consensus.

Most of the Service leaders are of the Baby Boomer generation. Most of the institutional knowledge of this agency is held by this generation. As these individuals retire in record numbers, they need to be involved in mentoring and leadership development opportunities so their shoes will not go unfilled.

--Andrea Kirk  
*Migratory Birds*

### ***Mark Your Calendars!***

#### **The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest is coming to Minnesota!**

October 17-18, 2008

Bloomington Art Center

Bloomington, Minn.

See beautiful works of waterfowl art... Meet current Federal Duck Stamp artist Joe Hautman and other talented local artists...

Watch as a panel of judges chooses one winner from hundreds of paintings... Celebrate the legacy of the Federal Duck Stamp, one of the world's most successful conservation programs ever...

Check <http://www.fws.gov/midwest> for more information in the coming months on the contest and many associated events.

#### **Meet Wildlife Photographer, Dudley Edmondson.**

11:00 a. m. February 29th, Fort Snelling G-110 Auditorium and 12:00 p. m., March 1st, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

# Let's Go Outside!

## *Evenings with Leopold*

I was born in Amarillo, Texas in December 1944 which reminds me how cultural nurture - as well as nature - can shape us as individuals and as a nation.

Out in the spring heat of the high plains, I'm sure that I must have heard the singing of meadowlarks mingling with the drone of the training aircraft. On weekend passes, my parents would strap me on a Navajo pack board and take me on hikes down into the Palo Duro Canyon, where they explored prehistoric ruins inhabited by lizards and snakes. One old black-and-white photo shows my Mom, laughing as she tugs on one end of a prairie dog carcass, while a weasel tugs on the other. My Dad would sometimes catch bullfrogs from a stock pond with his fly rod for our picnic supper.

When the war ended, we headed back to Lake Mills, Wisconsin, to my Mom's family farm, part of a tiny settlement known as "Faville Grove." Aldo Leopold had selected that cluster of conservation farms, homesteaded in the 1850s, as a study area for his new program in wildlife management. My Dad, Art Hawkins, was Leopold's third grad student, finishing his Masters Degree and publishing "a Wildlife History of Faville Grove" just before the war. Although I can no longer remember tagging along with Art and Betty on visits to the Leopold shack, or the Crawfish River Prairie, I can imagine how beautiful the evenings must have been, with spring peepers singing in the marsh and jacksnipe or woodcock doing their courtship flights overhead.

After working a few years with fellow waterfowl specialist Frank Bellrose at the Illinois Natural History Survey, my Dad took a flyway biologist job with the USFWS, and we began following the migration north to the pothole country of the Canadian prairies. I attended a one-room school in the tiny fishing village of Delta on Lake Manitoba. The village had a rustic waterfowl research station and a nearby airstrip, where Bob Smith and the



Tex Hawkins

other pilots would park their recycled army reconnaissance planes between survey flights that took my Dad west as far as the Rockies and a north to Hudson Bay.

Our gang – our little flock – of seasonal and local kids pretty much had the run of the place, from the sand and surf of the big lake to the chokecherry ridge road and from docks jutting out into the marsh back to the general store, where we purchased black licorice pipes and grapefruit pop that we called "channel water." Sometimes, we got to go duck trapping, bouncing along in the back of the pickup. Sometimes, we caught perch for supper with our cane poles. A few times, we shot blackbirds with sling shots, but quit when we were reprimanded and told about what happened to baby birds left in the nest. And one time, we all climbed into the belly of a black and orange Grumman Wigeon, taxied across the bay, roared into the waves, finally got up "on the step," and were exhilarated to look down at our parents, smiling and waving on the dock, so far below. Thinking back, I guess even Tom and Huck never had it that good.

--Tex Hawkins  
Watershed Biologist  
Upper Mississippi River National  
Wildlife and Fish Refuge

## After Thoughts

I was lucky to get more nature-nurture than most kids. When my folks finally did settle down (a half-century ago) on their farm north of White Bear Lake, they came to think of it as "the shack-north." And it was pretty rustic, with an outhouse, sagging sheds, a nice barn that got burned by vandals (next generation Tom and Hucks?), etc. I could walk to fish or skate on Otter Lake, through the back 40, hunt ducks on the marsh or pheasants in the field. I even trapped critters and sold the pelts. There was windbreak planting, duck box checking, box-elder tapping, wood-splitting, domestic goose and chicken farming, gardening etc. I liked fishing best. We've tied to give our kids as much exposure to nature as possible, living in Costa Rica, on state parks and near federal refuges. So have their grandparents. But our boys have come to regard nature as something to enjoy incidentally, once in a while, while investing themselves primarily in urban life. I guess that's where their friends and opportunities are located - how would they make a materially satisfying living out in the sticks? Once people get separated and estranged from rural life, it seems to be very hard to find a way back. I hope that can change.





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.

Director H. Dale Hall visits the RO.

Update on Technical Problems with Accomplishment Reporting System:

Recent changes to computer servers and software have caused many ARS users to encounter problems when attempting to use the system. Users may not be able to log onto the system, enter reports or attach photos. We are aware of these problems and working as quickly as possible to correct them.

Because of these problems, we don't have many photos to highlight in this "Around the Region" section. We ask that users be patient and we hope to have these problems corrected by mid-January. Once these problems are fixed, please continue sending reports and photos so we can highlight all the good working going on around Region 3.

Please contact Regional ARS Coordinator Chuck Traxler, 612-713-5313, with any questions or concerns.



## Quote of the Month

*“What does it mean, say the words, that the Earth is beautiful? And what should I do about it?*

*What is the gift that I should bring the world? What is the life I should live?*

*--Mary Oliver, Long Life*

## Caring Tree Initiative

A holiday tree was set up in the Eagles Nest, and decorated with ornaments, each of which lists a child's name, age, interests, sizes, and gift wishes.

Interested FWS employees sponsored children by selecting one or more ornaments and buying one or more presents for each child. I delivered the gifts to a program social worker, who distributed the gifts.

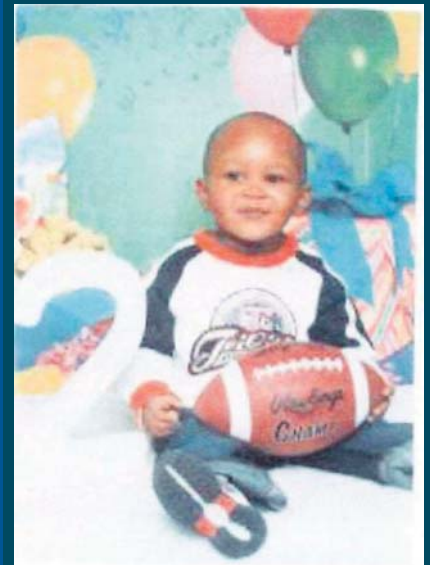
I want to thank you for your generosity during our Caring Tree Initiative. We sponsored 87 children during this year's drive. I was again struck by how beautifully you wrapped your gifts. Those gifts looked like the types of packages that would be given to family members. I am awed by your generosity!

Irene, the social worker that I worked with, said that your gifts were “amazing.” I had the good fortune of being able to see one of the kids, 17-year old Christina, when Irene gave her the donated gift. She was **THRILLED** with the gift card and makeup products. It was wonderful to see her excitement.

Please understand how much and how positively you are affecting our sponsored children's lives. The children we sponsored have been removed from their parental care. Those children are probably feeling as though people do not care. Your gifts send a message—that complete strangers care for them, and that there is hope.

The social workers at Hennepin County will again create a collage using pictures and thank-you cards from the children that were sponsored. I will place that collage in the Eagle's Nest some time in January.

--Mike Hoff, Fisheries



Above: Happy Hennepin County gift recipient enjoys his football.

Inside Region 3 is produced by the Office of External Affairs, Region 3, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ft. Snelling, Minn. Items included are selected from reports submitted by Region 3 offices via the Accomplishment Reporting System.

Photos included are used by permission and may be copyrighted.

Questions concerning Inside Region 3 or the Accomplishment Reporting System should be addressed to Valerie Rose Redmond, 612/713-5316 or email at [valerie\\_redmond@fws.gov](mailto:valerie_redmond@fws.gov)

Federal Relay Number: 1 800/877-8339

Available in alternative formats upon request

Equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, status as a parent and genetic information. For information contact the U.S. Department of Interior, Office for Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20240