



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

November 2007



About the Cover:

Shiawassee Refuge Manager Steve Kahl takes a moment to look through a spotting scope during the Big Sit! (see page 7 for details)

- Photo courtesy Steve Griffin

Midwest Brings the Duck Stamp Home in a Big Way

Wildlife artist Joe Hautman of Plymouth, Minn., won the 2007 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest - the oldest and most prestigious wildlife art competition in America - with his depiction of a pair of pintail ducks. Department of the Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne announced the winner on Oct. 13 in Sanibel, Fla.

“It was a privilege for me to congratulate Joe Hautman when the judges chose his art to grace the 75th Duck Stamp,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “The Duck Stamp program is unique in the realm between art and conservation. This art will be transformed into an equally beautiful stamp and help protect wetlands by generating funding through the sale of that stamp to hunters, stamp-collectors and conservationists. People talk about how art can change the world, and the Duck Stamp is an excellent example. You just need to look at the more than five million acres of waterfowl habitat protected by their purchase using funds from the stamp for proof of the power of this art.”

This year’s contest crowns the winner of the 75th duck stamp since the program’s inception in 1934.

The competition was surrounded by a week of public events at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and BIG Arts celebrating the life of artist, conservationist and creator of the Duck Stamp, J.N. “Ding” Darling.

Hautman attended the Federal Duck Stamp contest this year with his family. The audience gave him a standing ovation when his art was chosen as the winning piece. “I’ve been to a lot of Duck Stamp contests, and this is the most exciting one I’ve been to,” Hautman said.



This painting by Joe Hautman of northern pintails nesting won the 2007 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. It was also announced that the 2008 contest will be held in Minnesota.

“I’d like to thank my family, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, who turns this artwork into wetlands and ducks.”

The Midwest Region was honored with the top three winning positions in the competition.

Second place went to Harold Roe, of Sylvania, Ohio, who painted an acrylic of a lone green-winged teal. Third place went to Scot Storm of Freeport, Minn., who painted a pair of mallards in acrylic.

Eligible species for this year’s contest were the mallard, northern pintail, canvasback, green-winged teal and harlequin duck.

“This was the most exciting Duck Stamp contest in history,” said H. Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “To have a three-way tie for first place, then to have the artist and his family right here in the audience, was fantastic.”

2008 Contest in Minnesota

“We’re going to continue to move this contest around the country to give the public a chance to own this,” continued Hall. On Oct. 24, Hall announced the location for the 2008 Duck Stamp Contest. “I am pleased to announce that the 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest will be hosted in the nation’s heartland, with its strong heritage of hunting, fishing and bird watching. Midwesterners feel passionately about stewardship of land and waters for wild creatures and for future generations, and this is a great place for choosing the artwork to grace the Federal Duck Stamp.”

The 2008 Federal Duck Stamp Contest will take place during October in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. *Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs*

A Wild and Batty Experience

When I began preparation for a Boundary Waters Canoe trip in northern Minnesota with 36 Boy Scouts and adult leaders, I had no idea that it would result in an opportunity for myself, my daughter and several Boy Scouts to observe a little brown bat hanging contently from a sumac plant on a waterfowl production area only a few miles from my home.

On the trip, I learned that Scouts who traveled 50 miles or more afoot or afloat during the trip would qualify to earn the 50 miler award. An additional requirement for the award is that they work a minimum of 10 volunteer conservation service hours. To help the Scouts complete their service hours, Scout Master Joel Halbritter and I submitted a grant proposal to control invasive woody species on native prairie and oak savanna on the Weber WPA using labor provided by the Boy Scouts. Not only would this help the Scouts meet their requirements, it also helped to complete an invasive species project on the WPA that had stalled due to lack of funding.

A rainy August day didn't dampen the spirits of the enthusiastic Scouts on the first day of work. They attacked the invasive woody plants that were taking over the prairie. Armed with loppers and saws the Scouts slashed woody plants such as red cedar, box elder, honey suckle and buckthorn while sparing the natives such as lead plant, wild indigo, and prairie rose.

Throughout the day we saw monarch larvae feeding on common milk weed and discussed the butterfly's wondrous migration. We spied and discussed a painted turtle nest that had been destroyed by a predator. After leveling a



- USFWS photo

Boy scouts fan out to attack invasive woody vegetation on Weber Waterfowl Production Area

large patch of sumac we discovered wild onion, tall blazing star, Maximilian sunflower, big bluestem, and prairie dropseed among the many native plants that we were helping. By day end, we were all soaked to the bone, but now there was open grassland where only hours before had been shrouded by unwanted trees and brush.

Our project days were choked with fun-filled surprises. We tried to capture elusive leopard frogs that magically disappeared into the grass, peered into birds' nests to see if anyone was home, and scurried around a sleepy, grouchy skunk.

One of the most memorable events for me was when Morgan, my 10-year-old daughter, came to me and asked if I would like to see a bat. She'd looked up into a four-foot-tall sumac and noticed a bat

hidden within the leaves and branches. We all gathered and watched in awe. At sunset we stood on a hill overlooking our work and remarked on the lone sumac standing with its sleepy occupant.

We leveled several thousand unwanted trees and brush in six weeks, covering more than 70 acres of prairie, restored grassland and five acres of oak savanna. Many Scouts met their requirements for awards.

We accomplished a lot in terms of habitat restoration. But for me, the most important outcome was giving these young people an opportunity to connect with nature, experience plants and wildlife that they may not otherwise experience, and opening their minds to the importance and pleasure of our natural wonders. *Scott Glup, Litchfield WMD*

Awards and Recognition

The Midwest Region is committed to recognizing its talented workforce and dedicated to providing a positive work environment that demonstrates gratitude and appreciation for exceptional contributions to the mission. Employees and their many endeavors toward the larger organization are championed at the award level because the Midwest Region makes recognition and acknowledgment a priority. Supporting the mission of the Service with tangible results deserves recognition and reaps immeasurable harvest.

As such, the Midwest Region congratulates the following on a job well done.

Bill McCoy was awarded the *Land Legacy Award* for outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty by promoting the benefits of Patoka River NWR and its fish and wildlife to the local community. Bill used innovation and partnerships in a mosaic of land acquisition strategies and crafted working relationships with numerous conservation organizations to acquire lands for the Patoka River NWR.

Nebraska's Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District received the *National Land Protection Award* for the donation of 2,000 acres to the Service to establish Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge near Omaha, Nebraska. "This acreage, along with development of roads, trails, kiosks, fencing, fishing piers, and interpretive facilities has a value of \$6 million. In 2005, the District donated an additional 700 acres valued at more than \$1 million," said Eric Alvarez, Realty Division Chief, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Terry Pennaz, Jim Leach, and Jon Kauffeld received certificates for 30 years of service.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented its annual National Wetlands Conservation Award to **Jason Hill of Ducks Unlimited** for his work to restore wetlands throughout Indiana. Hill, a biologist for DU's Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office in Ann Arbor, Michigan, received the award at the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife 20th Anniversary Conference in Oklahoma City. **Pheasants Forever**, another winner at the event, was presented with the 20th Anniversary Partners for Fish and Wildlife Award. Pheasants Forever is a habitat organization dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs.

Hail & Farewell

Quality employees make the Midwest Region an outstanding place to work. We welcome the following new permanent employees:

Patrick Yasenak, Green Bay ES FO; **Shirley Weber** and **Melanie Desotelle**, Green Bay FRO; **Terri Campbell**, Marquette Biological Station; **Dennis Davis**, Green Bay FRO; **John McGrail**, Green Bay FRO; **Nathan Skop** and **Angela Lappin**, Jordan River NFH; **Samantha Chisholm**, Crab Orchard NWR; **Liisa Niva**, Missouri PLO; **Raymond Parrish**, Crab Orchard NWR; **Thomas Myers**, Jordan River NFH; **Richard Geboy**, Bloomington ES FO; **Alana Kiple**, Marquette Biological Station; **Richard Colburn**, Detroit Airport Inspection Office; **William Mcleod**, Green Bay FRO; **John Simpson**, RO ABA-Engineering; **Richard Hillard**, RO ABA-Contracting & Facilities Management; **Lynda Knutsen**, Refuges, Visitor Services & Outreach; **James Krizman**, Neal Smith NWR; **Andrew Prouty**, RO ABA; **Lisa Olson**, RO ABA-Human Resources; **Travis Culp**, DeSoto NWR.

We also bid farewell and said thank you to the following retirees: **Michael Murphy**, Hamden Slough NWR; **Stephen Wilds**, RO-Migratory Birds; **Reba Bicott**, Twin Cit-

ies FO; **Marvin McCarty**, St. Croix WMD; **John Guthrie**, Swan Lake NWR; **Timothy Julison**, Port Louisa NWR; **Stanley Smith**, RO- Ecological Service; **Leslie Peterson**, Detroit Lakes WMD; **Ronald Refsnider**, RO-Ecological Services; **Jean Pieper**, Horicon NWR; **Marshall Owens**, Desoto NWR; **MaryJane Lavin**, RO-Law Enforcement; **Kenneth Stromborg**, Green Bay ES FO; **Nancy Warner**, Neosho NFH ; **Terry Schreiner** , Minnesota Valley NWR; **David Lindberg**, Litchfield WAO; **Allan Rife**, Sherburne NWR; **Richard Sorensen**, RO-Refuges.

Names provided by the Regional Human Resources Office.

Whooping Cranes Take to the Sky toward 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 59 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 Morgan County, Indiana.

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.

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



- WCEP photo

Four ultralight aircraft are leading 17 young whooping cranes on their first southward migration.

along the way and on their summering ground.

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

Rachel F. Levin, External Affairs

Wisconsin Bass Find a Home in the Big Muddy

More than 1,200 five-inch largemouth bass from up north in Wisconsin found a new home down south when they were stocked at the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge's Overton Bottoms Unit in cooperation with Genoa National Fish Hatchery and Columbia National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

Genoa NFH generously donated the bass, left over from a mussel propagation project, to the refuge.

Genoa project leader Doug Aloisi hauled the fish hundreds of miles south from Wisconsin. Wyatt Doyle of Columbia NFWCO and Randy Stenberg of Big Muddy Refuge transported the fish back to two scour holes to replace bass lost in an annual flood event on the floodplain

of the Missouri River.

Largemouth bass grow very well in these two scour holes on the Overton Unit because of an influx of backwater nutrients and young-of-year fish brought in from the river each year. The abundance of food in these scours—including large schools of small shad—allow these areas to be over-stocked with the expectation of an over-abundance of food being replenished each year.

Each year the scours connect to the river through a small backwater slough allowing new food to enter the scours. However, about every five years the scours become inundated and bass move out into the river, resulting in a loss of the stock and a need for new fish. In light of the re-

cent invasion of Asian carp, biologists hope that as bass grow larger, they will aid in controlling the young-of-year carp that proliferate in these types of backwater areas when they connect.

Columbia NFWCO conducts annual surveys on these scours and will examine bass stomachs in the future to determine whether in fact they can be used as a biological control for Asian carp.

This collaborative effort is an example of creative use of the available resources within the Service to provide for endangered species, control invasive species and provide recreation to the public with minimal cost and effort. *Wyatt Doyle, Columbia NFWCO, Columbia, Mo.*

Mapping the Refuge System

You've got ducks to count and a unit left to burn when the phone rings. Washington needs to know how many miles of trails there are on the refuge, and they need your answer in two hours. Even though they may not tell you why they need the information, additional funding may depend on a timely and accurate answer. If you've entered trails in your station's Refuge Lands GIS database, you have the answer in a few minutes. If not, put the burn on hold, head to the field and get walking with your measuring wheel.

A customized module for ArcGIS, Refuge Lands GIS (RLGIS) is a ready-to-use GIS package with unique desktop tools for creating and editing information. RLGIS eliminates the need for field stations to create their own GIS organization, and gives the Service a start at generating consistent data for all National Wildlife Refuge System lands. Intrigued?

Staff from the Division of Conservation Planning have led the training effort in the Midwest Region. Four training sessions were held in 2007. Additional training is being planned for the spring.

For more information visit: <https://intranet.fws.gov/region9/refuges/rlgis/index.html>

Jane Hodgins and Gabriel DeAlessio, Division of Conservation Planning

Northern Exposure: One Survivor's Account of a Duck-Banding Adventure

On the blustery, undulating prairie of western Saskatchewan, a fearless Kim Mitchell of Ecological Services in the Regional Office made her mark on the duck population.

It was the second coldest August on record, and because it was uncommonly brisk, there were no mosquitoes. (Hallelujah!) After being soaked to the bone for two weeks straight, Kim started donning her rain gear first thing in the morning.

The four-person crew that Kim joined banded 4,500 ducks in 30 days. For three of the team members, it was like routine clockwork, but Kim admits she had a learning curve.

"You have to get the edges of the band completely flat on the leg, but you're also afraid you're going to break its leg," she explained. Kim estimates that she banded about 700 out of those 4,500 birds.

Kim didn't expect to battle beef cows for solid footing on marshy ground, or push them out of the way to get to the ducks. She also didn't expect to avoid the steaming landmines the cows left strewn across the landscape. And she didn't expect to enjoy the easy camaraderie that developed between team members, or to enjoy Texas Italian cooking.

Other unexpected delights Kim discovered: getting involved in a debate on the merits of hand sanitizer and rhapsodizing about the glories of Little Debbie Zebra



- USFWS photo by Joe Ham

Kim Mitchell with a newly banded blue winged teal.

Cakes.

I asked Kim if she would go again. She admitted that after being filthy and muddy and soaked, she still had fun. The only drawback was the fact that she missed August in Minnesota, one of the only months in this state when it isn't either sweltering hot (normally) or a toasty below zero. Kim said that now she knows what to expect and how to band the ducks, the next time would be much easier.

If you don't have experience banding ducks but like frolicking in the mud, keep your eyes open for the next spectacular opportunity to help the Migratory Birds Program monitor the success of the North American waterfowl population. *Andrea Kirk, Migratory Bird Permits*

Shiawassee Refuge Participates in The Big Sit!

Shiawassee Refuge participated in its first year of The Big Sit! on Oct. 14, 2007. Bird Watcher's Digest organizes this global bird count described as "birding's most sedentary event." The object is to find as many bird species as possible during a 24-hour period within a static 17-foot diameter circle.

I decided to spend the entire 24-hour period in the epicenter of circle, which was the top of the refuge's Grefe Tower. During the course of the 24 hours, I was helped by eight refuge volunteers. Our goal was to identify 72 species, because the previous highest Big Sit total in Michigan was 71. Breaking the record would further reinforce the refuge's stature as one of the best places for birds in the state. We hoped to give the Metro Munchers, Washtenaw Wingnuts, Erie Rockers, Chippewa Chirpers, and all the other Michigan Big Sit teams some competition for state bragging rights.

My diary of the day is below.

Midnight – The sky was full of stars as the day began. The temperature was a crisp 45° and there was no wind. I sat in the darkness at the top of the tower overlooking thousands of acres of marsh, open water, grassland, forest and cropland. Thousands of Canada geese were honking on our impoundments for the first bird of the day.

1 a.m. – Six species thus far. I could make out the shapes of several great blue herons as I scanned across our pools. I interpreted the cackling of two ring-necked pheasants as an indication of some sort of roost site squabble. The din of the geese made it difficult to pick out the calls of other waterfowl, but I managed to hear mallards and gadwall.

4 a.m. – Only two species added to the list in the last three hours! I could hear a small flock of northern shovelers close by discussing things. Fortunately, a cooperative pair of eastern screech-owls quickly responded to my whistles.

Unfortunately, the weather was poor for songbird migration. I hoped that I would hear the nocturnal flight calls of species like Swainson's and gray-cheeked thrush. However, the lack of cloud cover and light southwest winds yielded no migration overhead.

Still, I soaked in the experience. A single coyote called nearby, which elicited a wild chorus from a pack in the distance. Throughout the night, I could hear three different pairs of great horned owls calling.

7 a.m. – No new species and the temperature had dropped to 34°. Frost began to appear on the tower; but as light started to appear in the sky, bird activity starting picking up. Sandhill cranes started calling – one of my favorite sounds. I heard a vocal group of American wigeon zip past but never saw them.

9 a.m. – Forty-seven species on the list! I never tire of dawn near the marsh. Flock after flock of Canadas streamed past to feed in nearby fields. Five to 10 bald eagles were in sight all day. Ruby-crowned kinglets and yellow-rumped warblers foraged along the nearby forest edge. A very late sedge wren gave a ragged version of its song from out in the grassland.

1 p.m. – Sixty-five species on the list and 72 looks attainable. The sky



- Photo courtesy Steve Griffin

Shiawassee Refuge Manager Steve Kahl during his 24 hours of sitting still and listening to the birds.

is clear and the temperature reached 64°. A cooperative indigo bunting flew in and landed next to the tower; another species found beyond its typical departure date. Raptors began rising on thermals along the horizon.

5 p.m. – Only three species added, including a distant Wilson's snipe that zipped into my field of view as I scanned the marsh. A northern rough-winged swallow revealed itself among a large flock of tree swallows. The sky became overcast and a slow steady drizzle has started.

8 p.m. – No new species added. The rain has not yet stopped. Still dusk was beautiful. Six northern harriers came in to roost in the grasslands nearby. I was amazed at seeing thousands upon thousands of ducks leaving the refuge after sunset. It was barely light enough to see them at all.

Midnight – The first Shiawassee Refuge Big Sit! is in the books! No new species added since 5 p.m. and the grand total stands at 68. Not enough for a new record, but it is the third highest total found on a Michigan Big Sit! ever. Pretty respectable for the first year and I'm already planning for next year! **Steve Kahl, Shiawassee NWR**

Dr. Mamie Parker: A Midwest Angle

While my time with the Service has been relatively short, the name of Dr. Mamie Parker has come up many, many times. People always speak well of her, particularly African-Americans, whose pride-filled voices sing her praise, even outside of the Service.

Recently, I was at an unrelated business meeting with Tené Wells, President of Women Venture, a non-for-profit women's organization, when I mentioned that I'd joined the Service. She immediately recalled a chance encounter at the airport with a phenomenal woman who was a top executive in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. With her engaging charisma, sharp leadership skills and impressive road to success, Dr. Parker had clearly left a lasting and impressive imprint in her wake — an imprint not unlike the one she left when she departed the Midwest Region after 15 years of service. To this day, when they recall Dr. Parker's tenure here in the Midwest Region, executives and support staff alike still remember her buoyant personality with fondness.

I thought to myself, who is this woman that resonates such an impact from a single encounter, whose aura is still ever so present in the region after so many years? When I joined the Service, Dr. Parker had already bid the Midwest farewell to return to her native Southern roots. I looked forward to the opportunity to meet her, even perhaps in a different venue, but then was saddened to learn of her planned retirement in late November.



- USFWS photo by Karla Bartelt

Members of the Midwest Regional Directorate crown Dr. Parker with a tiara and scepter.

Recently, I was struck by a picture of Rachel Carson seated at a table with 17 men that appeared in the spring issue of *Fish & Wildlife News*. I couldn't help but see the parallel lines between the legendary conservationist Carson and Dr. Mamie Parker, who as the Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation is the first African-American woman to reach that level in the organization.

Throughout Dr. Parker's career, launched in 1978 at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin, there must have been many times when she, like Rachel, was *the only one* at the table, but even perhaps in Parker's case, *the only one* for more than 60 miles. We can all take a lesson from both trailblazing

women, each of whom strapped on their boots, restocked their reserves and waded through any impediments that would attempt to dim their personal passions or the conservation mission of the Service.

On Friday, Oct. 19, Midwest Regional Office and field office staff gathered to bid farewell to Dr. Mamie Parker. Members of the Regional Directorate presented Parker with gifts and tributes from the various program areas, including a tiara and 'scepter' (a sea lamprey mount) befitting of royalty—which Parker, after her long career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, certainly is. *Valerie Rose Redmond, External Affairs*

Walking On

Filtered rays of sun streamed down through Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, while the empty trees and fallen leaves echoed the loss of a friend, colleague and valiant servant of the Midwest Region U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Monday, October 22. It was apropos as a large crowd of friends and family gathered at the site on that day to pay tribute in a memorial to Paul Burke, “habitat conservation” biologist at the Twin Cities Field Office. Music, photos, and personal memories spirited the upbeat event, more of a celebration of a life than a dark memorial.

Harley riders club bikers, tribal representatives, mining company staff and other friends groups joined Paul’s family and the many Service personnel that came to say good-bye to the conservation enthusiast.

“Paul Burke was passionate in his love of the Minnesota North Country. He was proud to be a biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and never forgot that



Paul’s German shepherd, Cutter.

when a FWS biologist comes to work each day, the task ahead is nothing less than the protection of the natural world,” says Tony Sullins, who Paul reported to. “Paul joined the Service in 1979. He was in Washington D.C. for a short time, and then in Columbia Missouri for a few years.” He joined the TCFO (formerly the St. Paul Field Office) in 1988.

“Paul was an expert in transportation issues, and had forged very good relationships with Federal Highways and MNDOT personnel. He had used these relationships to effectively advocate for mitigation of wildlife and habitat impacts associated with highways,” says Sullins.

Born in 1951 and raised on the East coast, Paul identified heavily with urban youth because he’d spent a large portion of his childhood in an apartment in the Washington D.C. area, according to his sister. Clearly, it was a pull that fueled his passion and devotion to connecting urban children to nature and to the Blue Goose Fund, a trust created to help defray the cost of transporting Twin Cities youth to the refuge, as he was a frequent visitor to the refuge when children’s events were taking place.



- Photos courtesy TCFO staff

Twin Cities Field Office Biologist Paul Burke passed away on Oct. 17, 2007

Paul loved motorcycles and dogs. Sadly, Paul’s German shepherd, Cutter, died earlier this year, prompting him to write, the following ode to his dear friend.

Friend,

The Ojibwa people describe the passing of a soul into the next world as having ‘walked on’. My friend Cutter has walked on. He shared his 11 years of life with me, and brought me more health and happiness than I can describe here. I celebrate the experience. He was and always will be the best friend. He can be followed, but he can never be replaced.

Paul

Paul Joseph Burke “walked on” on Oct. 17, 2007, after suffering a head injury that he never recovered from. Valerie Rose Redmond, *External Affairs*

Around the Region



- USFWS photo by Michael Stemper

Ron Beam, maintenance worker from Crane Meadows NWR, assists a young visitor with her air rifle at the Sherburne NWR Wildlife Festival.



- USFWS photo

Biological Science Technician Katrina Glascock from the Ludington Biological Station watches a chemical introduction station during a sea lamprey treatment on Jordan River NFH.



- USFWS photo by Chuck Traxler

(left to right) Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty joins State Senator Ellen Anderson and Regional Director Robyn Thorson, along with an eagle and its handler from the University of Minnesota Raptor Center, at the Minnesota State Fair to celebrate the delisting of the bald eagle.



- USFWS photo

Local students participate in a new Junior Naturalist Program at Squaw Creek NWR.



- USFWS photo by Pat Harris

Columbia ES Field Office Biologist Paul McKenzie conducts a plant survey on Mingo NWR to help the refuge develop a comprehensive plant list.



- USFWS photo by Megan Seymour

Researchers measure a Lake Erie watersnake during the 2007 census on Ohio's North Bass Island.

A Service Call to Duty

Rick Rottman didn't know what to think when he got the call notifying him that the Army National Guard had involuntarily extended him and that he was now activated for a tour of duty in Iraq. The call came six weeks after landing a job with the Service as an HR Assistant and a few months before a scheduled discharge in October of 2005. "The first thing I did was let Fish know that I'd been activated. Then I had to get things in order at home, like my will, life insurance and bank accounts. I wasn't here long and then I was gone," Rick recalls.

Stationed 15-20 miles outside of An Nasiriyah, at Camp Adder or Tallil Air Base, Rottman says that he joined the armed forces because he wanted to "protect the country like our forefathers." It's no revelation that war wrecks havoc on

the environment and the health of the people in the midst of it. Iraq is no different.

"They [the Iraqi people] are struggling over there, even with all the coalition forces helping them," says Rottman. "We built water, sewer and power plants. We were running them. Now they are running them. We see them trying to do something...They want to put their best foot forward, [but] sometimes that's not enough." When asked if there was safe drinking water, Rottman said he didn't know because he didn't go into the community, but the soldiers drank bottled water from the Iraqi plants. While there, Rottman says he read a lot of books.

He liked to read John Grisham and Stephen King.

The 18-year veteran of the armed forces was born and raised in Caledonia, a small farming community in southern Minnesota. He met his wife of eight years in La Crosse, Wis., where she was attending school. He was attending Western Wisconsin Technical College at the time. Deb and his five-year-old daughter, Olivia, both were happy and relieved to see Rick's smiling face when he finished his tour of duty and returned



- Photo courtesy Rick Rottman
Rick preparing the leave for Iraq in March 2006.



- Photo courtesy Rick Rottman
Rick, back home with his wife and daughter in August 2007.

home in July 2007.

Rick says the greatest challenge that he faced when he returned to the States was trying to get used to the way his family had done it [life's routine] for two years. "I had to step back and realize that this is how they did things," he says. He also struggled with the getting used to a normal 8-hour work schedule, as when he was in Iraq a 10-12 hour work day was the norm. "I'm glad to be back on U.S. soil," Rottman says. "I know people say it over and over but...running water, all the amenities... we take it for granted."

Rottman rejoined the Fish and Wildlife Service on Oct. 1, 2007.

We are glad to have you back Rick, and we thank you for your service. *Valerie Rose Redmond, External Affairs*



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