

Friends Forward

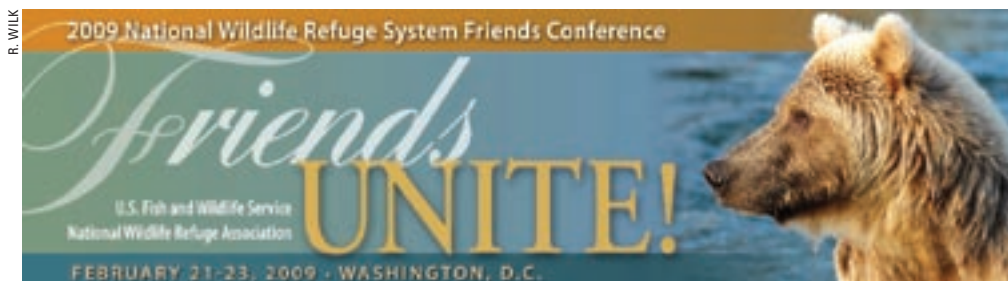


Winter 2009

National Wildlife Refuge System

National Friends Conference Set for February

New Hunting Guide Online



What may be the largest gathering of representatives of nonprofit Refuge Friends organizations and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is planned for February 21–23 in Washington, DC. The 2009 National Friends Conference, sponsored by the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, will feature nearly two dozen training sessions and special forums, all under the conference theme of “Friends Unite!”

“Our national wildlife refuges are canaries in the coal mine when it comes to pressing issues like climate change, competition for water and combating invasive species,” says Jim Kurth, deputy chief of the Refuge System, “We chose the theme — Friends Unite! — to reflect the great need for committed wildlife and refuge supporters to come together and work toward our shared goal of securing America’s wildlife heritage for future generations.”

The conference hopes to have at least one representative from each of the 200-plus Refuge Friends organizations along with the managers from the refuges represented. The goal of the conference is to welcome the broadest participation of any national Friends conference yet mounted. Sessions will be offered under three tracks and will address varying levels of experience:

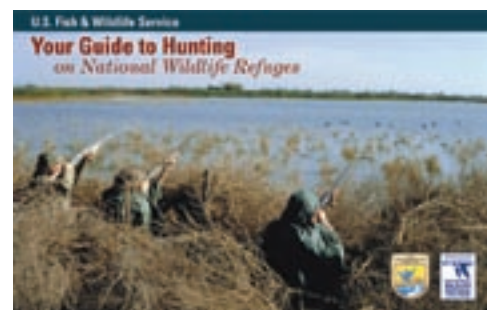
Refuge System Resource Challenges

- Climate change, fire, invasives, water resources and issues “beyond the boundaries”

Tools, Programs and Strategies for Success

- Transportation funding opportunities
- Citizen science programs
- Making refuges more inclusive
- Organizing in the age of connectivity

Finding terrific hunting opportunities at national wildlife refuges has just become easier with *Your Guide to Hunting at National Wildlife Refuges*, the first comprehensive compilation of all hunting programs within the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is online at: www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/.



More than 300 hunting programs are available on national wildlife refuges in every state except Hawaii. National wildlife refuges present a diversity of hunting opportunities from deer and big game, to waterfowl and turkey, to upland birds and small game.

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to perpetuating and enhancing the great American tradition of hunting,” said Service Director H. Dale Hall. “Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac* that ‘the sweetest hunts are stolen’

Saving Three Sisters Springs

by Lace Blue-McLean

The Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge raised \$2.7 million in only 10 months as a first step toward purchase of the 57-acre Three Sisters property, once slated for development of a gated residential community. The funds were enough to allow the City of Crystal River to obtain a \$6.3 million Florida Forever grant, but the fundraising continues as appraisals are obtained and sale negotiations begin.

The Three Sisters property includes three pristine springs that feed into Kings Bay and the headwaters of the Crystal River on the west coast of central Florida, providing critical winter habitat for the endangered West Indian (Florida) manatee.

“The springs at Crystal River are a crucial warm water source for the manatee,” says assistant refuge

manager Keith Ramos. “They could be damaged by development and they’re the last natural clear springs in central Florida.” The Three Springs property has been a top priority for the refuge for some time and an extension of the refuge boundary has been approved to allow for the property to be incorporated into Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge, part of Chassahowitzka Refuge Complex.

The search for funding began in late 2007, when the property owners indicated a willingness to sell the land for permanent conservation. Not long after that, one of the landowners was at the site with several refuge staff and Friends members when they observed a manatee calf with severe propeller injuries on its back. While some members of the group arranged for a recovery vehicle, the landowner and others entered the water in

street clothes to keep the cow and calf from leaving the area. After the successful rescue, the landowner told that group that he could not have asked for anything more to help him understand the importance of saving the site.

The Friends group, Save the Manatee Club and other organizations met with the City of Crystal River manager to discuss acquiring the property with funding from the Florida Community Trust’s (FCT) Florida Forever Program. The Friends stepped forward as the principal community organization to spearhead fundraising.

The Florida Forever grant was a major milestone in the ambitious land acquisition effort that not only protects manatees but also provides eco-tourism and community recreation. Three Sisters Springs area would be the first wild manatee viewing opportunity in Citrus County, Florida. There are plans for a visitor center, trails and recreational use of a lake on the property.



K.C. NAVFIELD

This has been a very complicated project from the beginning. The simple act of getting everyone around the table at the same time is extremely challenging. The National Wildlife Refuge Association partnered with the Friends to help develop and implement a strategy for acquiring the springs that respected the legal interests and available resources of all the parties involved. For the Association, Three Sisters Springs has been a premier example of its Beyond the Boundaries initiative to conserve landscapes surrounding refuges in order to ensure their long-term ecological integrity.

The Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida raised \$2.7 million in only 10 months as a first step toward purchase of the Three Sisters Springs property, prime habitat for manatees.

Continued on page 3



CHED BRADLEY

Firing Up a New Generation

When people who live near the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida see columns of smoke or even fire coming from the refuge, they can ask their teenage sons and daughters to explain it. A \$10,000 Nature of Learning grant to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association, the refuge Friends group, has allowed several hundred high school students to learn about prescribed burns and do some research of their own on the refuge.

Refuge ranger Nancy Corona wanted to bring more young people to the refuge and help science teachers meet some of their curriculum objectives. Along the way, students would learn about wildlife habitat and prescribed fire. The partnership ultimately included the University of Florida's 4-H Extension Agency, Astronaut High School and the Merritt Island Wildlife Association.

The Wildlife Association hired a retired teacher to write a curriculum that included pre- and post-tests and applied the science standards and lessons students were learning in class. The University provided workshops for teachers, refuge staff and volunteers in using hand-held GPS units.

In spring 2007, refuge staff met with 700 students in all four grades at Astronaut High School, talking about fire and the refuge. More than 200 students visited the refuge to see the habitat that prescribed fire is designed to conserve. The students put down transect lines through three different habitats, starting in wetland and ending in scrub. At every meter, they marked the type of vegetation, and at every 5 meters, they conducted a water percolation test and examined soil type. One class

was able to witness a controlled fire on scrub habitat—the dwindling habitat needed for the threatened scrub jay and gopher tortoise as well as the endangered indigo snake.

The grant money will be used to purchase GPS units, Google map software for the school, bus transportation and substitute teachers. During the pilot program, staff discovered that a single school day did not allow enough time for both the transect work and GPS training. This school year 4-H Extension Agent, Gus Koerner, will spend several days at the high school training students in GPS use before students visit the refuge.

Corona was impressed with the degree of student interest and is pleased that the students have been exposed to field techniques as well as the scrub habitat. The cycle of training will expand this year when the high school students go to a nearby middle school to prepare younger students for their own trip to the refuge.

More information about Nature of Learning grants is available at www.fws.gov/refuges/education/natureOfLearning/index.html.



High school students near Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida learned about the habitat needs of the endangered scrub jay through a program funded by a Nature of Learning grant.

Sisters, continued from page 2

The Friends and their conservation partners can envision the day when critical manatee habitat is preserved, natural water filtration and recharge systems are restored, and ecotourism, environmental education and public recreation are improved. It is often said that “hope springs eternal.” The Friends’ hope is to ensure eternal public access to these beautiful springs.

Lace Blue-McLean is president of the Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge. ❧

News Wanted!

We welcome stories about your refuge Friends group's activities and accomplishments as well as articles about the contributions of individual Friends. In most cases, your contributions should be no longer than 300 words. Please submit high-resolution photos (300 dpi) to illustrate your story. Send materials to Karen_Leggett@fws.gov.



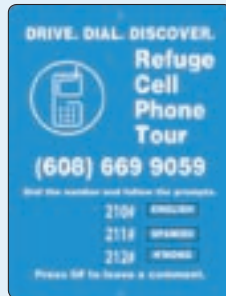
from friend to friend

share your
success
stories

Beyond Brochures

Podcasts are showing up on the Web sites of refuges and refuge Friends organizations as the newest way to share lots of information easily and in a format that reaches new audiences — especially younger visitors. Georgena Terry, a member of the **Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex**, interviewed a wildlife biologist about prescribed burns; the Friends president who is an expert on grasslands; and a conservation biologist from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology about the cerulean warbler. Each interview is 10–15 minutes long; Terry adds a little music and edits out the stray “um...uh” before posting it online at www.friendsofmontezuma.org/audio.html.


The Refuge System Birding Team is recommending iPods to promote birding. **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge** in North Carolina has a sample at www.fws.gov/peaisland/podcast.html, with a production guide available at www.fws.gov/refuges/birding/birderFriendly.html. The Iowa Academy of Science used a Preserve America grant to produce multiple podcasts for each of the six refuges and one wetland management district in Iowa www.scienceiniowa.org.



Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge offers a cell phone tour of its auto route. Messages may also be downloaded from the Internet as podcasts.

At **Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge**, visitor services manager Cindy Samples worked with Guide by Cell www.guidebycell.com to create messages along an auto tour. Cell phone symbols posted along roads around the refuge alert visitors to stop and call 609-669-9059. The messages may also be downloaded as podcasts from the refuge or the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges Web site www.friendsofuppermiss.org/podcasts.html.

Highlights and Tips

- Keep it simple. Use an Internet phone connection and a telephone. At www.talkshoe.com, the interview is scheduled like a conference call and saved as an MP3 file ready to be downloaded to an iPod or listened to via computer.
- Topics are endless. “What do people ask about when they come in to the visitor center — those are the subjects to address,” says Terry.
- Submit your podcasts to iTunes for free to help expand exposure to your refuge. 

From Friends Conference to Cattail Swamp

by Betsy Burch

How can we create an unstructured play area for children who visit our refuge during special events? Our journey to answer this question began at the 2008 Friends for the Future Conference where three of us from Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA, heard Cheryl Charles, president of the Children and Nature Network, encourage all of us to find ways to offer children a place to explore and play independently. We were excited by her ideas and promised ourselves that we would find a way to do that at our own refuge.

Our Friends group already had a small committee that had worked with refuge staff and volunteers from the community to create the Fledgling Fort, a permanent place within the visitor center




Young visitors at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in California learn to use magnifying glasses.

where children's activities are always available. This committee spearheaded our plans for an outdoor visitor area that would be ready in time for National Wildlife Refuge Week in October.

Our Friends kids' corner committee met with the refuge manager, who thought that an area of cattails could be made into a cattail maze with a relatively small amount of effort. Refuge staff committed to preparing the cattail swamp area so that children could safely play and explore the area. Ultimately, a large area was cleared and trails were marked among the cattails.

Friends members committed to creating activities, including backpacks filled with a field journal, inexpensive magnifying glasses, bug boxes and butterfly nets, compasses and small containers to hold specimens. One activity that was especially popular was collecting specimens of plants, dirt, etc. to take back to the visitor center where we had a digital microscope set up with our laptop. The children could view their highly magnified specimens on the computer screen.

Because the cattail area floods in winter, the trails were a one time project. But we hope to create another outdoor adventure area for our Aleutian Goose Flyoff the first weekend in March. Our long term goal is to find funding and volunteer assistance to create a permanent outdoor area, including a deck over one of our ponds, for independent family activities.

Betsy Burch is president of the Friends of Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in California. Contact the Friends at <frdsofhnwr@gmail.com>. 

Planning for Refuge Week

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week 2008 at the local library.

Friends member Kathy Woodward says "it was not a lot of work but the libraries were delighted. There were two showcases in my library, so I had things about Great Swamp Refuge in one and the Refuge System in the other. It could be an idea for any size group."

Refuge Week was also highlighted in Washington, DC, metro area libraries in 2008. Packets including visitor guides, bookmarks, area refuge brochures, a bibliography of nature books and posters were sent to more than 80 local library branches. At the main branch of the Washington, DC, public library, a large tabletop display

was in place throughout the month of October. Several libraries hosted presentations by refuge staff on careers in the Refuge System, endangered species and nearby refuges.

"Get Some Nature Into Your Kids" posters were placed as public service advertising on local buses and in Washington area subway stations. A local public transportation organization must typically approve a request for PSA advertising and there may be a nominal installation charge. It is wise to request applications and approvals from both public transit agencies and libraries several months in advance. For information on bus- or subway-compatible images of the "Get Some Nature Into Your Kids" poster, contact <Karen_Leggett@fws.gov>.



Posters are available for Friends groups and refuges.

Civics 101

Subcommittees and caucuses, Appropriations and budgets, and who are your new (or returning) members of Congress anyhow? It can be as difficult to decipher the ways of Capitol Hill as to figure out the way an entire ecosystem operates. Here's a brief primer.

Committees

There are four congressional committees/subcommittees that primarily work on refuge issues. House and Senate Appropriations Committees/Subcommittees write the legislation that allocates federal funds to government agencies, departments and organizations.

- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee <epw.senate.gov/public>

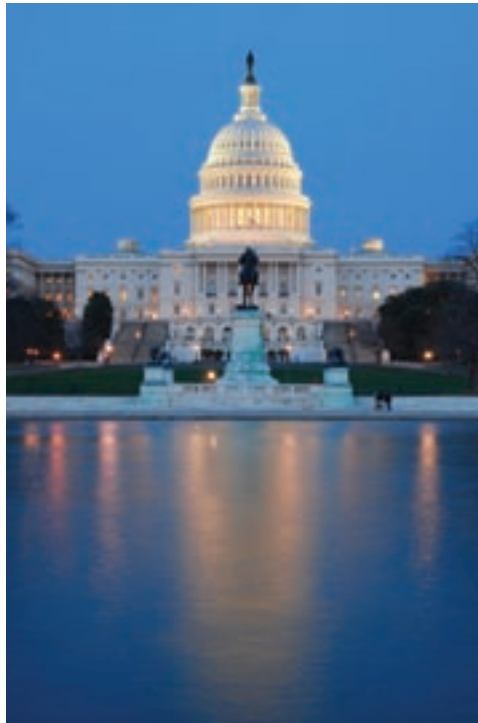
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies <appropriations.senate.gov/interior.cfm>

- House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans <resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=60>

- House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies <appropriations.house.gov/Subcommittees/sub_ienv.shtml>

In addition, in the Senate, where legislation can only be referred to a single committee, refuge-related bills that are part of larger legislative packages may be referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Congressional and Legislative Affairs works regularly



with congressional offices and committee staff on legislation related to the Refuge System. This division serves as the central contact for individual congressional members and committees.

At <www.fws.gov/laws>, you can find a digest of federal resource laws, Service testimony and the congressional calendar.

Caucuses

Caucuses, which are much more prevalent in the House, form because of mutual interests among congressional members. In 2006, Congressmen Ron Kind (WI), Jim Saxton (NJ, now retired), Michael Castle (DE) and Mike Thompson (CA) launched the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus. During the 110th Congress, 146 members of the Refuge Caucus represented 228 refuges. The Caucus is committed to raising awareness of the Refuge System and supporting adequate Refuge System budgets and strategic growth of the Refuge System.

The 111th session of Congress begins in January. The Caucus will need to reconstitute itself in the new Congress and will continue to add new members. The 2008 Caucus members are listed online at <www.refugenet.org/new-issues/refugecaucus.html>.

CARE

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) <www.refugenet.org/CARE/CareHome.html> is a coalition of 22 wildlife, sporting, conservation and scientific organizations with a total membership of 14 million Americans. CARE was formed in 1995 to highlight the needs of national wildlife refuges and work to secure strong investments in them. The Web sites of member organizations are listed on the next page.

CARE regularly sends letters to Congress and submits written testimony for committee hearings, urging increased appropriations to address the Refuge System's needs. CARE sponsors regular briefings for members of Congress and their staffs on key issues affecting the Refuge System, such as law enforcement and contaminants.

CARE will be challenging the new Administration to fund the Refuge System's operations and maintenance budget at \$765 million by the end of its first term, and will be calling on the new Congress to do the same.

"CARE, now in its 15th year, is excited to work with the new Administration and Congress, and we'll start by urging Congress to provide up to \$1 billion for jobs on refuges in the next stimulus package," said Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association and current chair of CARE. "We have an unparalleled

opportunity before us to create jobs that will stimulate America's economy, provide increased opportunities for visitors to watch wildlife, hunt and fish, and build innovative green-design structures that will serve as models for federal infrastructure."

Budgets and Laws


Friends Forward (Winter 2007) included a description of the budget process. Each year, Congress is expected to authorize each department, agency, or program to spend a specific amount of money, and the president signs the bill into law. This money may not be spent, however, until it has been appropriated by Congress for a given purpose.

For the current fiscal year, Congress was not able to agree on specific appropriations bills so a continuing resolution was passed, effective through March 2, 2009, allowing government agencies to spend the same amount of money they spent during the previous year. Congress may choose to approve specific appropriations or allow the continuing resolution to remain in effect for the rest of this fiscal year, ending September 30, 2009.

Any member of the House or Senate may introduce legislation and so

become the sponsor of a proposed law. Then the bill sets off on a long journey:

- Bills are given a number and referred to appropriate subcommittees or committees.
- A subcommittee or committee may hold hearings to take testimony from experts, other public officials, supporters and opponents. The Service may be invited to testify.
- When hearings are completed, the subcommittee or committees must "mark up" the bill to make any changes prior to recommending it to the full committee or voting it out of committee.
- If the subcommittee votes *not* to recommend a bill, or a full committee takes no action, it may be incorporated into other legislation or it may die.
- Of the 6,000 to 10,000 bills introduced each year, only three to four percent become law.

Where do Friends fit in? "Friends are the grassroots voice," says Maribeth Oakes, The Wilderness Society's director of the Refuge System program. "They are powerful voices for the Refuge System. It is important for Friends to stay informed, active and engaged." 

CARE Contact List

Friends Forward online version has clickable links <www.fws.gov/refuges>.

American Birding Association

www.americanbirding.org

American Fisheries Society

www.fisheries.org

American Sportfishing Association

www.asafishing.org/asa

Assateague Coastal Trust

www.actforbays.org

Congressional Sportsmen's

Foundation www.sportsmenslink.org

Defenders of Wildlife

www.defenders.org

Ducks Unlimited

www.ducks.org

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

www.iafwa.org

Izaak Walton League of America

www.iwla.org

The Corps Network

www.corpsnetwork.org

National Audubon Society

www.audubon.org

National Rifle Association of America

www.nra.org

National Wildlife Federation

www.nwf.org

National Wildlife Refuge Association

www.refugenet.org

Safari Club International

www.safariclub.org

The Wilderness Society

www.wilderness.org

The Wildlife Society

www.wildlife.org

Wildlife Management Institute

www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org

Wildlife Forever

www.wildlife-forever.org

U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance

www.ussportsmen.org

The Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org

Trout Unlimited

www.tu.org



Q&A *send us your questions*

Q: How can Friends organizations take advantage of new Web-based networking opportunities?

A: The array of opportunities is almost endless and many are quite simple to manage without extensive technical knowledge. Several Friends organizations are already networking electronically. The **Friends of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge** in Mississippi has a page on Facebook, which began as a social networking site for teens. Friends member Susan Brooks started the page in June 2008; at last count, 218 people had joined the Noxubee network, most of whom are not members of the Friends group but many connected to nearby Mississippi State University.

The Facebook page lists event notices and a link to the Friends newsletter. Both Brooks and volunteer Marion Sansing have answered questions about wildlife in general and the refuge in particular. Sansing was able to reach out to the University community through the Facebook page when she wanted to bring more visitors to the opening of a new sculptural installation at the refuge.

YouTube.com, the popular Web site for videos, has a full page of tips and tricks to help nonprofit organizations get the most out of video and YouTube. There is even an option to permit donations <www.youtube.com/nonprofits>.

Flickr.com and **SmugMug.com** are ways to share photos of your refuge. Roger Windemuth, a photographer and member of the Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington, initiated a photo contest for adults and young people and established an electronic database of more than a hundred photographers interested in the refuge. The Friends use this database to send out information about the photo contests, refuge workshops and photography events at the annual Birdfest.

A search of the Ridgefield Refuge name on Flickr.com brings up



ROGER WINDEMUTH

Hooded merganser from Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington

hundreds of dramatic images of landscapes and wildlife. There are also Flickr photos from Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, Tualatin River Refuge in Oregon and Back Bay Refuge in Virginia.

Note: Department of the Interior computers are not able to access Facebook or YouTube. ✎

Calendar

February 21 – 23

2009 National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Conference
For more information contact <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov>, 703-358-2392 or Desiree Sorenson-Groves at the National Wildlife Refuge Association, 202-333-9075 x23 or <dgroves@refugeassociation.org>.

March 1 – 5

Association for Partners on Public Lands Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD – “Navigating the Future”
<www.appl.org/Training_Conventions/2009index.html>

March 30

Refuge Friends Mentoring Program applications due. To request an application kit, contact <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov>, 703-358-2392.

April 1

National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program online applications due. For more information, visit <www.nfwf.org/refugefriends> or contact <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov>, 703-358-2392 or <Ellen_Gabel@nfwf.org>, 202-857-0166.

May 27–29

National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV training course “Developing and Working with Friends Organizations.” For more information, contact <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov>, 703-358-2392.

June 1-4

NCTC training course “Connecting People to Nature Through Birding.” For more information, contact <Juanita_Gustines@fws.gov>, 304-876-7956.

Bring the Birds! Bring the Birders!

Does the bookstore at your refuge sell binoculars and field guides, especially for beginning birders? Have you developed not just an up-to-date bird checklist, but also a birding guide for your refuge? Do you promote the sale of Duck Stamps not just to hunters, but to birders as well?

Many of the almost 40 million annual visits to refuges are from casual visitors or avid birders. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birding Team, which includes birders and birding experts from around the country, is recommending strategies for attracting even more birders to refuges.

Celebrate Urban Birds!

Early last year, the Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology to promote birding, habitat conservation and citizen science. The Cornell Lab has an

urban birding kit perfect for use by Friends. Printed in English and Spanish, the kits include a packet of sunflower seeds, two small posters showing many urban birds as well as tips on attracting backyard birds and reducing threats to them in cities.

The Cornell Lab is also enlisting “citizen scientists” in its research on how urban birds use green spaces. A short survey included in the urban birding kit can easily be used during family or other activities at the refuge. Participants are asked to spend 10 minutes watching birds in a small area (the size of half a basketball court), identifying them and describing the area (rooftop garden, tree-lined street, park, yard, refuge).

Limited quantities of the Celebrate Urban Birds kits may be obtained by contacting <Karen_Leggett@fws.gov> (703-358-2375) or visiting the Cornell Lab site at <birds.cornell.edu/celebration>.

Not Just for Hunters

Proceeds from the federal Duck Stamp are used to purchase wetlands and waterfowl habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. An estimated one-third of this country’s endangered and threatened species find food or shelter on refuges established with Duck Stamp funds, and 98 percent of each Duck Stamp dollar goes directly to acquiring important bird habitat.

Here are a few ways Friends groups can promote the sale of federal Duck Stamps:

- Purchase and distribute copies of *The Federal Duck Stamp Story* brochure or download it from <library.fws.gov/Pubs9/Duck_Stamp_Story02.pdf>.

- Display and sell small plastic stamp holders that birders can attach to their binoculars or packs (QLT Novelties at <www.qlt.com>, model #92033).

- It may be borrowed from all Service regional offices or purchased (\$350) from Banner Creations, 612-871-1015, <www.bannercreations.com>.

- Create compelling events such as field trips or festivals where participation/entry requires a Duck Stamp.

- Promote your local Junior Duck Stamp contest. The program incorporates scientific and wildlife management principles into a visual arts curriculum with participants completing a Junior Duck Stamp design as their visual “term papers.”

All proceeds from the sale of Junior Duck Stamps are used to support the National Junior Duck Stamp Program and help educate students about the importance of habitats and wildlife conservation. The top three national Junior Duck Stamp winners receive scholarship money.

All Junior Duck Stamp state contests are held between mid-March and early April. The national contest will be held in Washington, DC, at the National Postal Museum on April 22, which is also Earth Day.

All information about the contest and materials are available for download on the Junior Duck Stamp Program Web site at <www.fws.gov/juniorduck/ArtContest.htm>.



Ninety-eight percent of each Duck Stamp dollar goes directly to acquiring important bird habitat.

Continued on page 10

Birders, continued from page 9

Does Your Store Attract Birders?

Add some small and simple items to your shelves:

- Binoculars suitable for both adults and children, with different price ranges and a printed guide on how to choose binoculars
- Binocular straps or caddy
- Lens pen or lens cleaning products
- Illustrated bird checklist for children
- Contact information for local birder resources (guided walks, etc.)
- Audio/video guides to birds and bird identification
- Pins or patches for your refuge that can be attached to binocular straps or caps

Two new guides to birds and birding are particularly worth considering:

Orvis Beginner's Guide to Birdwatching by Service employee Alicia King (Rockport Publishers, 2008)

The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America by Birding Team member Bill Thompson and his wife, Julie Zickefoose (Houghton Mifflin, 2008)

For reviews of nature-themed books for kids, check out a regular blog by award-winning children's author Mary Quattlebaum at the National Wildlife Federation: <www.greenhour.org/content/blog/list_posts/author/4783>. 🦋

Funding Transit in Refuges

National wildlife refuges have been awarded \$3.25 million for six projects under the Paul Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (PSTIPP). Formerly the Alternative Transportation in the Parks and Public Lands, the awards now honor retired Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, who championed the use of alternative transportation on public lands.

- The largest award of \$2 million will fund a multi-use non-motorized connection from the town of Jackson Hole, WY, to the National Elk Refuge. A similar pathway will connect to Grand Teton National Park.
- Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (NM) received \$126,000 to replace an aging school bus used for tours and environmental education with a bus using alternative fuel.
- San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge (CA) got \$45,000 for an alternative transportation study.
- Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the Eastern Shore of Virginia won two awards for just under \$1 million to help reduce

congestion at its fee booths. One project will connect the refuge to the town's bike trail systems. The second will provide ways to pay the refuge entrance fee in town to reduce time spent at the booth. The Friends group, the Chincoteague Natural History Association, was heavily involved in seeking these grants and is now working on a long-term assessment of alternative ways to address pervasive and seasonal congestion issues.

- Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex (WA) worked with the Makah Tribe to win a \$124,000 award to study improved parking, trails and public transit access to Shi-Shi Beach — a prime surfing area — on the Olympic Peninsula. The funds will go directly to the tribe.

Proposals for 2009 funding are due in February, with \$24.3 million available. For more information, contact Nathan Caldwell, alternative transportation coordinator, at 703-358-2205 or <Nathan_Caldwell@fws.gov>. 🦋

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (VA) received two Transit in Parks awards to link the refuge to town bike trails and reduce congestion at fee booths.



JOHN AND KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH / USFWS

Thoughts from a Refuge Manager

by Jonathan Schafler

It seems to me that the most successful Friends groups have mastered the art of relationships that make a difference. It's good to have a working board, a strong membership and activities that encourage people to discover your refuge. But what about those people who have no idea you exist, those audiences that are not your traditional visitors, people and organizations who don't normally associate with wildlife or wild places?

If we are to survive in this fast-paced, technology-driven society, we need to think outside refuge boundaries and challenge ourselves to really examine the needs and desires of the communities we serve. Public lands can only survive with a strong supportive constituency and successful Friends groups can reach out and build that constituency.

So, what kind of outreach are you doing that really reaches the people in your community?

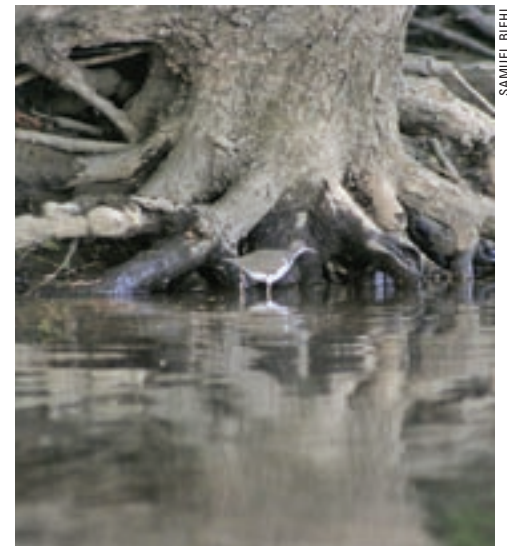
- Do you have a presentation that supports the refuge?
- How about a nice tabletop display that can be taken to outreach events?
- If you have a store, can it be portable to sell items at other compatible venues?
- Does your county, state or municipal park know about your group?
- What are the city council or county commissioners up to that might interest or affect the refuge and spark a partnership?
- How about local realtors who rent and sell properties—do they have information about the refuge to provide to prospective buyers?
- Are there local land trusts, civic organizations, high school and college environmental clubs with whom you could collaborate on long-term goals or specific projects?

Sometimes it's not so much about activities you do on the refuge as it is about extending your reach and sharing your successes and your vision with others.

Jonathan Schafler is manager of Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in West Virginia. ❧

Welcome

The Friends of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge is ready to start growing. The newly formed organization took charge of food, children's crafts, multimedia presentations and a bird watch station during an open house and dedication of the new refuge headquarters and visitor center in October. President Gene Hilton says the Friends group has already acquired several partners among local organizations, plans to attend this year's Friends conference and request a mentoring visit in 2009. The group is working with refuge staff to schedule special activities and speakers at the new visitor center. Ohio River Islands Refuge was established in 1990 and includes 22 of the Ohio River islands from Pennsylvania through West Virginia to Kentucky. ❧



Buckley Island, Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Guide, continued from page 1

when you can find some undiscovered place under everybody's nose. Millions of people already hunt on national wildlife refuges, but this guide should make discovering that perfect place so much easier."

By using *Your Guide to Hunting at National Wildlife Refuges*, hunters can learn what species are available

to be hunted at individual refuges. In a short description, the Guide also gives a flavor of refuge hunts that take place in a variety of habitats. The Guide provides directions to each wildlife refuge as well as permit requirements and information about special hunts for youth hunters and hunters with disabilities. ❧

Connecting People with Nature

Resources and ideas to bring people out of doors are sprouting all over the country. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program called Connecting People With Nature (CPWN) was established in 2007 to help ensure that Americans develop strong lifelong connections with the natural world.

The group's Web site, Let's Go Outside <www.fws.gov/letsgooutside>, suggests activities and educational programs for adults and children.

Neighborhood Explorers is an online game to motivate kids to go outside <www.fws.gov/neighborhoodexplorers>.

There will also be promotional activities and downloadable materials developed around seasonal themes in 2009 including:

- Love Affair with Wildlife for Valentine's Day
- Building Memories for Memorial Day
- Red, Wild and Blue for 4th of July
- Back to School (which will coincide with National Wildlife Refuge Week activities in October)

A popular singing group, the Jonas Brothers, joined Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne in a public service announcement promoting a "Get Outdoors It's Yours Campaign" <www.getoutdoorsitsyours.gov>.



Invasives Training Wins Award

The National Wildlife Refuge System's online invasives training curriculum has garnered second place in a national competition sponsored by the National Association for Interpretation.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Center for Invasive Plant Management, which designed the Web site, were honored for excellence in the delivery of natural, cultural and historical interpretive services. "Volunteers and Invasive Plants: Learning and Lending a Hand" is an online series of learning modules to help refuge volunteers and others learn to



identify and help eradicate or manage invasive plants <www.fws.gov/invasives/volunteersTrainingModule/index.html>. There is a companion curriculum for refuge staff.

Conference, continued from page 1

Friends Capacity Building

- Succession planning
- Energizing your board
- The business of Friends
- Recruiting/retaining members
- Avoiding burnout

The Friends Organization and Volunteer of the Year will be honored at an awards dinner Sunday evening. Following the conference, the Refuge Association will sponsor and lead a "meet and greet" visit to Capitol Hill.

For more information, contact Trevor Needham at the Service, <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov> or 703-358-2392.

Spread the Word



Friends Forward is available online. A limited number of newsletters is printed and mailed. So send your Friends organization and prospective members to <www.fws.gov/refuges/friends> to download the latest edition.

FriendsForward

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