



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Friends and Volunteers

Annual Update FY 2008

People Making a Difference



Volunteers, Friends organizations, and partner organizations are important allies for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These individuals and organizations provide vital help in fulfilling the Service's mission of conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Each year, volunteers, Friends organizations, and partners generously give time, ability and resources to the National Wildlife Refuge System, National Fish Hatchery System and Divisions of Migratory Birds, Law Enforcement and Ecological Services. They play a vital role in serving over 40 million visitors who enjoy public lands managed by the Service.

During Fiscal Year 2008 (October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008), **39,765** volunteers gave **1,557,764** hours in support of Service activities. The value of their labor was **\$30,391,975**, and their donated time equaled **749** full-time employees. The number of station-specific Friends organizations has steadily increased and is now more than 200.

There is no better way to show the value of our volunteers than to share some of their successes. Along with individual volunteer achievements, we will describe new and innovative programs our Friends organizations are carrying out. We will also highlight partnerships with long-time allies Take Pride in America, National Public Lands Day and the Student Conservation Association, along with recent relationships with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the American Hiking Society and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

What Authorizes the Service to Accept Volunteers?

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended by the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 and the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1988, authorized the Service to accept volunteer services. Congress reauthorized the Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act in 2004, affirming its desire to involve Americans as stewards of our nation's natural resources and wildlife. As a

result, the Refuge System expanded its volunteer program, and environmental education programs, recreational opportunities, and community-based partnerships increased.

How Do You Find Out About Volunteer Opportunities?

Volunteer opportunities with the Service are posted at www.volunteer.gov/gov. You may also contact staff at the field office where you would like to volunteer, the volunteer coordinator for the Service region where you would like to volunteer or the Service's national headquarters. See contact information at the end of this report. For more information about the Service's volunteer program, visit www.fws.gov/volunteers or call 800/344 WILD.

Many Service field offices, especially national wildlife refuges, have Friends organizations that support the work they do. Contact your local office to learn more.

Volunteer Highlights

Who Are Our Volunteers?

Service volunteers are people who want to give back to their communities or are interested in a specific function of a Service office, or both. They include parents wanting to model environmental stewardship, retirees willing to share a wealth of knowledge and experience, outdoor enthusiasts wishing to spread the word about America's great natural treasures and concerned citizens of all ages interested in making meaningful contributions while learning about conservation.

How Do We Calculate the Value of Our Volunteers?

Although volunteers' skills, knowledge, and time are priceless, the Service uses the figure calculated annually by Independent Sector, the leadership forum for charities, foundations and corporate giving programs, to put a monetary value on their contributions. For FY 2008, an hour of volunteer time was worth \$19.51.

Volunteers complete tasks that would otherwise be done by Service staff, or go undone. The Service uses a full-time equivalent, or the hours worked by a full-time employee in a year, to figure the number of staff positions filled by volunteers. A full-time equivalent equals 2,080 hours.

Volunteer contributions have increased dramatically since the program began in 1982. In that year, 4,251 volunteers gave 128,440 hours, with a value of \$1,104,584. In FY 2008, 39,765 volunteers gave 1,557,764 hours, valued at \$30,391,975.



Nevada Waterfowl Association Board Member Travis Rowlett and his son Danner release a banded wood duck

Volunteer Contributions in FY 2008

Number of Volunteers	39,765
Hours Donated	1,557,764
Total Dollar Value	\$30,391,975
Full-time Equivalents	749

Volunteer Contributions for Each of the Last 10 Years

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Number of Volunteers</i>	<i>Hours Donated</i>	<i>Hourly Value</i>	<i>Value of Volunteer Service</i>
1999	28,757	1,277,207	\$15.09	\$19,273,053
2000	35,684	1,332,875	\$15.68	\$20,899,480
2001	36,006	1,462,599	\$16.27	\$23,796,485
2002	39,534	1,352,952	\$16.74	\$22,648,416
2003	44,126	1,628,550	\$17.19	\$27,994,774
2004	37,958	1,532,123	\$17.55	\$26,888,758
2005	37,996	1,478,797	\$17.55	\$26,677,497
2006	36,169	1,447,421	\$18.04	\$27,168,092
2007	37,881	1,491,152	\$18.77	\$29,092,375
2008	39,765	1,557,764	\$19.51	\$30,391,975

Volunteer Contributions by Region for FY 2008

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of Volunteers</i>	<i>Number of Volunteer Hours</i>	<i>Full-time Equivalents</i>	<i>Monetary Value</i>
1 (Northwest)	7,467	203,116	98	\$3,962,793
2 (Southwest)	3,935	241,670	116	\$4,714,982
3 (Midwest)	7,951	199,232	96	\$3,887,016
4 (Southeast)	7,950	347,987	167	\$6,789,226
5 (Northeast)	5,214	255,104	123	\$4,977,079
6 (Mountain-Prairie)	3,338	131,169	63	\$2,559,107
7 (Alaska)	505	60,659	29	\$1,183,457
8 (California-Nevada)	3,312	111,851	54	\$2,182,213
9 (Washington, DC)	93	6,976	3	\$136,102
Total	39,765	1,557,764	749	\$30,391,975

What Do Our Volunteers Do?

Volunteers help the Service with many tasks. Some work full-time; others give a few hours a week or month; and still others help with special events.

We match our volunteers' talents and interests with work to be done, which varies from site to site. Volunteer tasks include surveying fish and wildlife populations, banding birds, leading tours and educational activities, helping with laboratory

research, managing cultural resources, doing administrative duties, working with computers and other technical equipment, maintaining facilities and writing grant proposals.

Volunteer Hours by Activity

<i>Region</i>	<i>Wildlife & Habitat</i>		<i>Recreation</i>		<i>Cultural Resources</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 (Northwest)	69,249	34,845	55,171	25,377	6,554	11,920	203,116
2 (Southwest)	82,083	22,763	53,039	63,072	1,779	18,934	241,670
3 (Midwest)	74,014	16,439	52,988	32,332	3,307	20,152	199,232
4 (Southeast)	87,524	40,712	95,187	83,652	2,151	38,761	347,987
5 (Northeast)	82,405	20,782	75,214	40,564	4,569	31,570	255,104
6 (Mountain-Prairie)	38,483	17,417	28,368	28,973	3,594	14,334	131,169
7 (Alaska)	27,769	9,325	14,127	7,331	130	1,977	60,659
8 (California-Nevada)	69,827	17,013	11,023	10,621	216	3,151	111,851
9 (Washington, DC)	1,257	1,178	0	0	600	3,941	6,976
TOTAL	532,611	180,474	385,117	291,922	22,900	144,740	1,557,764



2008 Volunteer of the Year, Marie Springer

Volunteer of the Year

Marie Springer of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, NJ, was the 2008 Volunteer of the Year. In 2008 alone, Marie logged more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time for the refuge and the Refuge System, the equivalent of a full-time employee.

A talented artist, Marie created 31 costumes of local wildlife for the refuge's Nocturnal Creature Night, held each Halloween, and painted a 275-foot maze depicting Wallkill River and its wildlife. Also a skilled researcher and wildlife enthusiast, she collected and documented over 5,000 native bees and taught the public about the refuge's recently discovered population of the endangered Indiana bat. She helped with bird counts, invasive species management and land acquisition. Marie has been president of Friends of Wallkill River since its start in 2006 and helped increase its membership to nearly 100.

Marie's volunteerism extends to nearby refuges like Shawangunk Grasslands and Supawna Meadows, as well as to the Refuge System as a whole. She coined the phrase "Every Refuge Matters" and has played an integral role in forming and growing multiple Friends organizations. She generously shares her skills in non-profit management with volunteers nationwide. Whether she is attending town meetings on proposed development next to refuges or speaking before Congress in support of increased funding for the Refuge System, Marie is a bold advocate for refuges everywhere!

Other Volunteer Accomplishments

Volunteers helped the Corpus Christi Ecological Services Field Office, TX, with two main activities in FY 2008. In May 2008, they helped with the annual census of colonial water birds nesting on islands in the Upper Laguna Madre of South Texas. The annual census takes place during one of the last two weeks in May, and volunteers help count nesting pairs of all species at various times over this time period.

Earlier in the year, volunteers spent a half-day removing debris from 45 islands in the Upper Laguna Madre. The field office partnered with the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Audubon and U.S. Geological Survey to provide logistical support for the cleanup effort. Volunteers came from several Boy Scout troops, one ROTC unit, one church, and the general public. Collected refuse filled a large dump truck furnished by the City of Corpus Christi's Storm Water Department.



Volunteers for the Corpus Christi Ecological Services Field Office remove debris from a colonial water bird nesting island in the Upper Laguna Madre, Corpus Christi, TX

A volunteer with the **Service's Southwest Regional Office, Migratory Birds Permit Office, NM**, checked breeding bird survey routes in NW Chihuahua, Mexico, and collected Geographic Information Systems and habitat data. The volunteer also started surveys on an unstudied river system, providing new data on bird distribution. Biologists from The Nature Conservancy in Mexico helped with the project. Nearly 700 volunteers helped with Rio Reforestation, a half-day event on the

Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, TX. They planted more than 11,000 native trees and shrubs on 15 acres. Volunteers began leading canoe trips on the Rio Grande from the Roma Bluffs World Birding Center in Roma. They also helped maintain and restore wetlands by mowing and tilling, maintaining water control structures and checking the condition of wetlands. They collected seeds and put together plant bands for the revegetation program. They also mended fences; posted boundary signs; reported law enforcement and resource management issues, including illegal ATV use, trash disposal and fences needing repair; and helped with festivals and other outreach opportunities. They maintained and enhanced refuge quarters, buildings and facilities, including the new headquarters for the refuge's fire program.



Nearly 700 volunteers plant native trees and shrubs during the annual Rio Reforestation held on the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, TX (photo: Nova MacEntley)

Volunteers are integral to the operation of **Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, OK**. In FY 2008, they helped with eagle watches, youth art contests, school groups, the youth fishing derby, mowing, farming, trail maintenance, surveys and tours. The refuge's largest volunteer event is the annual Birding and Heritage Festival. This year, a new event was added to the festival - youth trap shooting. Volunteers also helped with biological censuses, including the ever-expanding least tern and snowy plover monitoring.

Projects for volunteers at **Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, TX**, included staffing the visitor center and running the nature store daily. Volunteers trained van tour interpreters and gave tours to more

than 500 visitors. They gave programs during a monthly lecture series and bus tours for groups with special needs. Volunteers helped with environmental education programs for school groups. They helped host special events such as the Kids Fishing Clinic and Migration Day, which is attended by more than 800 students and their teachers. Volunteers staffed festival booths and worked with scouts on service projects and badge requirements.

Maintenance projects included mowing, trail trimming, building the new fishing pier and kiosks for new exhibits, upgrading Jones and Hog Lake viewing areas and keeping bathrooms, signs and roadsides clean.



A volunteer at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, TX, trims vegetation along a trail.

Volunteer Mandy Bodart organized and inventoried the outreach and education materials at **Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge, WI**, which are now available on loan to local teachers. She organized the video library and created a list of videos available. In addition, she helped finish certificates of appreciation to be given by the Service to Wisconsin State-wide Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan partners in 2009.

Ron Refsnider organized and supervised a project to find out the nesting range of the endangered Kirtland's warbler in the State of Wisconsin. He captured and color-banded Kirtland's warblers at three locations and summarized his findings in a year-end report.

While earning a criminal justice degree at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta, a volunteer at the **Atlanta Port Authority, Office of Law Enforcement, GA**, helped with case preparation, U.S. Attorney meetings, cargo inspections, and administrative duties at the port and Southeast Regional Office. The volunteer presented a paper on these activities to an academic panel prior to graduation.



Volunteer Ron Refsnider bands a Kirtland's warbler in Wisconsin

Staff at **Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, CA**, recruited volunteers with natural resources and wildlife biology degrees to help with nest monitoring and other California condor recovery efforts. They helped the California condor coordinator create a monthly population update that is passed throughout the recovery program and used in outreach materials. After working for six months, each volunteer received a certificate of appreciation and recognition gifts. Volunteer groups joined in numerous "micro-trash" cleanups on and off refuge lands. Micro-trash, such as glass shards and bottle caps, can harm California condors and their chicks.



Volunteer Amanda Wilhelm holds an adult California condor on Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, CA

In November 2007, **Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, NV**, had its first volunteer planting event in 10 years. Third-through-fifth-grade students in Tobler Elementary School's Gifted And Talented Education program used their own gloves and shovels to plant 600 native seedlings. They also spread seed over two acres of land next to the recently restored Jackrabbit Spring outflow. Fifty-one kids and 30 adults moved at lightning speed, doing most of the work in three hours. After lunch, volunteers saw an Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish and toured a previously restored site to see what the area they had just planted will look like in 10 years.

Volunteers at **Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, NV**, helped with an extensive wood duck survey program supported by a partnership with the University of Nevada - Reno and the Nevada Waterfowl Association.



A student from Tobler Elementary School and his family plant native vegetation at Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, NV

Friends Organization Highlights

What are Friends Organizations?

Friends are private, independent, community-based, nonprofit organizations formed primarily by citizen volunteers who support the mission and purposes of a national wildlife refuge or other Service office. There are more than 200 Friends organizations that work with the Service.

What Do Friends Do?

Friends are vital to Service activities. These important allies advocate for their field stations by giving information to the local community and elected officials, encouraging community participation in programs and building long-term support. They raise funds and offer volunteer staff to do conservation work that might otherwise go undone. They help with education programs and special events. Friends are an essential link to the community to promote land stewardship. They give time, skills and resources for wildlife conservation.

Friends Organization of the Year

The Friends of Pool 9 from the **Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Iowa and WI**, was the Friends Organization of the Year in 2008. Three years old and 400 members strong, the Friends of Pool 9 are making a difference along their 31-mile stretch of the 261-mile refuge. Despite challenges such as severe flooding throughout Iowa, the Friends of Pool 9 made notable improvements to the quality of the refuge in 2008, earning praise from refuge staff and cooperation from the local community.

The Friends of Pool 9 host many annual events to protect and showcase all the refuge has to offer. Their annual Pool-Wide Cleanup Day and the start of a "Leave-No-Trace" program rid the refuge of trash left behind by visitors. Each fall, their Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival brings over 300 people to the area to enjoy and invest in the region and the refuge. They also share the refuge with youth through environmental education programs such as The Mississippi River Adventure Day.

These high-visibility programs and projects have improved the local communities' relationship with the refuge and spawned new Friends groups all along the river. Four new groups have recently formed using the Friends of Pool 9's grassroots approach as an example. By improving communication between the refuge and the public through their quarterly newsletter, "The Otter's Tale," and reaching out to local newspapers, news networks and radio shows, the Friends of Pool 9 have gained regional recognition for their efforts, and they're just getting started!



Friends of Pool 9 and volunteers gather for a river cleanup at the upper end of Pool 9 on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Iowa and Wisconsin

Other Friends Accomplishments

When people living near **Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, FL**, see columns of smoke or even fire on the refuge, they can ask their teenage sons and daughters to explain it. A Nature of Learning grant to the Merritt Island Wildlife Association, the refuge Friends organization, has allowed several hundred high school students to learn about prescribed burns and do some research of their own on the refuge.

A partnership among the University of Florida's 4-H Extension Agency, Astronaut High School and the Merritt Island Wildlife Association teaches students about wildlife habitat and prescribed fire. The Wildlife Association hired a retired teacher to write a curriculum that includes pre- and post-tests and applies the science standards and lessons students learn in class. The University provided workshops for teachers, refuge staff and volunteers in using hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) units. The grant money will be used to pay for GPS units, Google map software for the school, bus transportation and substitute teachers.

Big Oaks Conservation Society, the Friends organization for **Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, IN**, has taken on a new challenge – stewardship of Old Timbers Lodge. Built in the early 1930s by Alexander Thomson, chief executive officer of Champion Paper, the building is now part of the refuge. The lodge is on the National Register of Historic Places and open to visitors only through special arrangement. Visitors to the

lodge prior to refuge ownership include songwriter Cole Porter, the founders of Proctor & Gamble and the Johnsons of Johnson & Johnson. The Johnsons are said to have tested floor waxes on the floors of the lodge's soaring 68-foot-by-36-foot great room.

Volunteer Dave Bear, who teaches building trades at the local high school, led volunteers in cosmetic renovations during the "Lodge Makeover Weekend" in early May. The volunteers cleaned, caulked, scraped, painted, cleared gutters and evicted boring bees. The Society is raising money to cover major repairs

and needed maintenance equipment. Once the work on the lodge is complete, the Society will use the site for refuge support activities and educating the public about the cultural past of the surrounding land.

Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands celebrated the transfer of Plum and Pilot Islands from the U.S. Coast Guard to **Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge, WI**, in May 2008. The Friends will preserve several historic maritime structures on Plum Island, including a boathouse, a lighthouse, keeper's quarters and a fog signal building.

Dean Nelson remembers the struggle to keep his livestock healthy through the frigid Minnesota winters on what is now **Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, MN**. A hole cut into pond ice offered the only drinking water for his sheep. The Oral History Project, a joint effort of the Tamarac Interpretive Association, the County Historical Association and the refuge, is capturing this and other stories about life on refuge land, including activities of a Civilian Conservation Corps camp. Members of the Association's history working group are videotaping people who lived on what is now the refuge. Association members will lead interpretive history walks on the refuge. Videotaped interviews will be the focus of an educational program both in the visitor center and on the Internet.

The history committee of the **Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, NJ**, has made good use of the U.S. Census, finding county-by-county statistical abstracts of agricultural production. Additional information at the New Jersey State Library gave them several dozen pages of handwritten agricultural census records made in July 1870 from the townships in which the refuge is located. There were 40 farms in the area at that time. The Friends will combine and analyze all of this information to learn how land in the Great Swamp was used nearly 150 years ago.

The Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex partnered with RPM Ecosystems, a native plant nursery, to sponsor a tree sale to raise money for reforestation projects at the **Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, NY**. For every tree bought by an individual, the refuge is able to buy two trees. Trees will be planted along the Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canal to help cerulean warblers, bald eagles, wood ducks and other wildlife.

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society formed a new partnership with Biologie, The Conservation Fund and the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, FL. Three local salons that use Biologie products competed to be named the Biologie Select G.R.E.E.N. Salon of the Year. Biologie donated to the Society \$3 for every Biologie bottle and \$1 for every non-Biologie bottle returned to the salons, earning the Wildlife Society \$7,000. After the contest, 60 stylists from the three salons trimmed invasive plants along a trail and filled four trucks with exotic weeds.

The **Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, FL**, raised \$2.7 million in only 10 months to help buy the 57-acre Three Sisters property, once slated for development as a gated residential community. The funds allowed the City of Crystal River to secure a \$6.3 million Florida Forever Grant. The fundraising continues as appraisals are done 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, offering critical winter habitat for the endangered West Indian (Florida) manatee.

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, NM, will soon reach new heights, literally. The Friends of Bosque del Apache raised \$63,000 to buy 6,272-foot Chupadera Peak and 140 surrounding acres. Chupadera Peak will be the highest point on the refuge and the natural destination of the popular Chupadera Wilderness Hiking Trail, a 9.5-mile round-trip hike. Before the purchase, the trail stopped a few hundred feet from the summit.

The **Friends of Norfolk National Fish Hatchery, AR**, is fairly new, but you can't tell by looking. With more than 285 members, the group consists of community leaders, businesses, guide services, outfitters and a wide variety of clubs and other organizations. The Friends group is the primary sponsor of the hatchery's Kids Fishing Derby and remodeled an unused hatchery quarters into a unique and informative visitors center. The Friends have raised more than \$20,000 to support and enhance the hatchery and its mission.

In June 2008, the **Friends of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, MS**, created a page on Facebook, a social networking web site. More than 218 people have joined the Noxubee network. The page

lists events and a link to the Friends newsletter. Volunteers have answered questions about wildlife in general and the refuge in particular through this medium.

Roger Widemuth, a photographer and member of the **Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, WA**, started a photo contest for adults and young people and created an electronic database of more than 100 photographers interested in the refuge. The Friends use the database to send out information about photo contests, refuge photography events and the annual Birdfest.

After learning about unstructured play areas for children who visit natural places at the 2008 Friends Conference, the **Friends of Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA**, decided to offer unstructured play at their own refuge. A Friends sub-committee met with the refuge manager, who suggested an area of cattails could be made into a maze with a small amount of effort. Refuge staff prepared the cattail swamp so that children could safely play and explore the area. A large area was cleared, and trails were marked among the cattails. Friends members created activities and backpacks filled with field journals, hand lenses, bug boxes, butterfly nets, compasses and small containers to hold specimens.

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, NM, hosted the first-ever Youth Forum for the Environment in April 2008. The refuge Friends, Los Amigos de Sevilleta, bought tote bags, water bottles, journals and other give-away items for the event. They helped with logistics and made travel arrangements for groups attending the event.

Thirty-four students, from ten groups across a four-state region, and their instructors, sponsors and parents, joined refuge staff, University of New Mexico researchers and special guest biologists to show how young people are protecting their local environment. The youth helped restore habitat at a new outdoor classroom on the refuge by planting native grass and shrub seeds. They also cleared limbs and brush from a foot trail. The resulting piles were burned in a demonstration by the Service's New Mexico Fire District's crew.

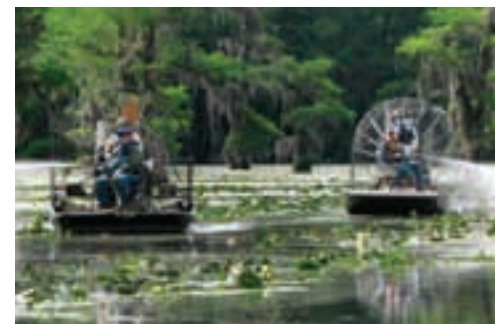
Funding for Invasive Species Helps Our Friends Help Us

Invasive species are those that are not native to an area and spread easily, harming native plants and wildlife. They

are one of the greatest challenges for Refuge System managers. According to the 2008 Refuge Annual Performance Planning database, 2.3 million acres of refuge land are infested with invasive plants, and there are 4,387 invasive animal populations on refuges. In FY 2008, the Service treated about 15% of lands affected by invasive plants, 60,000 more acres than in FY 2007.

In FY 2008, the Refuge System's online invasive plant training system, *Volunteers and Invasive Plants – Learning and Lending a Hand*, developed with the Center for Invasive Plant Management, won a national award from the National Association of Interpretation. It includes modules that engage people in invasive plant issues and management. It gives basic, science-based information suitable for all audiences. The five self-study units present the purpose and history of the Refuge System, how volunteers help with invasive plant management, how refuges manage invasive plants and tips for community outreach. Each unit has a quiz and web-based resources that allow learners to explore topics more thoroughly.

Using funding from the volunteer and invasive grant program to control phragmites on refuge land, staff at **Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, MD**, inspired local officials to tackle it on county lands. A father-and-son mapping team funded by the grant collected critical data about phragmites locations on the refuge. Staff successfully controlled the aggressive plant, creating landscapes largely free of it. Kent County Commissioners recognized the refuge for the work and observed that it is one of the few places in the County where the public can see the marsh as it once was. They were inspired to train and outfit County employees to control phragmites in strategic off-refuge locations.



Spray teams fighting against salvinia on Caddo Lake.

Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, TX, worked with the Cypress Valley Navigation District on a challenge cost-share grant to help the Giant Salvinia Response Team reduce and remove giant salvinia in Caddo Lake. The grant supplied labor, materials and equipment to local spray teams. The refuge offered ability and funding to test new chemical control products. The program is scheduled to finish in spring of 2009.

Partner Highlights

Each year, the Service works with an ever-growing group of allies. Volunteers from long-time partners such as the Student Conservation Association, National Environmental Education Foundation and Take Pride in America give many hours supporting our projects. In FY 2008, partnerships were set up with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the American Hiking Society and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

National Public Lands Day

National Public Lands Day, sponsored by the National Environmental Education Foundation, is the largest volunteer, hands-on event of its kind in the country. Every year on a Saturday in September, thousands of volunteers roll up their sleeves and make meaningful improvements to America's public lands. On September 27, 2008, several thousand volunteers at thirty-seven Service sites experienced nature first-hand while learning to manage their public lands.

As part of the fourth annual National Public Lands Day Tour, sponsored by National Environmental Education Foundation and Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc., Toyota Program Director Robb Hampton visited work sites in a hybrid Prius, delivering \$1,000 grants to help with upcoming events. The Friends organizations at **Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, WV**, and **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, MD**, each received a visit and a grant.

At **Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, WV**, volunteers, including some from West Virginia University, planted 2,500 native red spruce trees that Friends of the 500th bought with the grant. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy gave another 1,500 trees. Volunteers were treated to a ride on Timberline Four Season Resort's chair lift, which gave easier access to the planting site, located next to the resort.

The Friends of Blackwater used their grant to help restore habitat for birds and an endangered squirrel species. Volunteers planted trees to fill a large gap in the forest, which will create a more complete, continuous woodland habitat.

Volunteers at **Kern National Wildlife Refuge, CA**, cleaned around waterfowl hunt blinds, added vegetation and wire frames to existing blinds, weeded around water control structures and cleaned around parking lots and bridges.

At **Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, FL**, volunteers removed weeds from the half-mile-long cypress boardwalk, weeded and mulched the butterfly garden and planted cypress trees around the refuge.

At **Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho**, volunteers prepared for the upcoming refuge centennial by creating an interpretive trail about refuge and reservoir history. The trail recognizes contributions to the refuge by Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration crews. Volunteers also picked up litter and removed invasive plants.

Volunteers at **DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, Iowa**, collected seeds, removed invasive plants and picked up trash.

Volunteers at **Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Maine**, planted 600 shrubs and trees to improve habitat for the New England cottontail, an endangered species in Maine. They also removed invasive plants.

Events were held at two sites of the **South Texas Refuge Complex, TX**. Volunteers at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge picked up trash, cleaned



Volunteers at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, TX, remove trash from the Sweetwater River on National Public Lands Day (photo: Earl S. Cryer)

trails and worked in the gardens. Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge had volunteers weeding the butterfly garden, picking up trash around the visitor center and maintaining trails.

Student Conservation Association

The Service and the Student Conservation Association have been successful partners for more than 20 years. It is a perfect union – the Service has a range of important work to be done, from environmental education and interpretation, to stream stocking and habitat monitoring, to data collection, while the Association has eager volunteers. Through its Conservation Intern Program, the Association recruits college students who work between 12 and 52 weeks. For summer projects, they offer Conservation Crews, made up of high school students from across the nation and experienced leaders.



Student Conservation Association interns remove salt cedar by hand from fields and ditches on Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, AZ

In FY 2008, the Association placed 171 volunteers and leaders at 70 Service field stations in 35 states. Association crews gave 118,000 hours, an increase of 32 percent from FY 2007.

At **Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, AK**, a high school crew moved about one mile of trail away from an eroding bank.

Volunteers formed an invasive plant strike team at **Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, AZ**, to remove salt cedar. This was the third native plant corps partnership between the Association and the refuge.

At **Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA**, eight interns helped with educator-led field trips for grades K-6, offered educator and office support and helped plan events. They also created on- and off-site lessons and helped with educator training workshops and weekend programs.

At **Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, OK**, two outstanding volunteers helped with several projects, including Texas horned lizard surveys, bird censuses, interpretation and environmental education.

Take Pride in America

Take Pride in America is a national partnership set up by the Department of the Interior that inspires



Americans to help care for their public lands. Take Pride's goal is to instill in every citizen an active sense of ownership and responsibility for natural, cultural and historic resources and to support and recognize those who volunteer on public lands.

In FY 2008, Take Pride in America led a "VolunTour Across America," sponsored by Toyota. Take Pride staff traveled in a Toyota Highlander, logging more than 5,200 miles along the West Coast and through the Southeast and Midwest.

The group visited **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, NC**, on April 30. They stopped at four refuges on their Midwest tour -- **Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, MO**, on September 13; **Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Iowa**, on September 16; **Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, MN**, on September 18; and **Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, OH**, on September 24.

The annual Take Pride awards recognize exceptional stewardship in the following categories: corporations, individuals, nonprofit organizations, schools, local or state governments, volunteers, and Federal land managers. Take Pride award winners were honored at an event in Washington, DC, on July 18, 2008. Three individuals and groups associated with the Service were recognized.

Charles Holbrook, retired Project Leader, **Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex, TX**, put the Take Pride in America mission into outreach, education, and conservation activities that affect local communities in South Texas. Working with more than seven grant sources, he secured more than \$400,000 in funding for the refuge's prairie restoration, invasive species management and wetland renovation projects. More than 50 acres of prairie have been restored with the help of local school groups.

Charles started the Kemp's ridley sea turtle nesting survey on Matagorda Island, involving the refuge in the

national recovery program for this endangered species. He gathered and trained more than 60 volunteers for sea turtle work on some of the last available lands for releasing hatchlings into the wild. He has helped school children improve public lands and help endangered species. As an in-school mentor, he has helped students achieve academic success and develop visions for their future, especially in environmental conservation careers.

John "Jack" Webb is a "jack of all trades" and has used his talents as a carpenter, plumber, fundraiser, mechanic, landscaper, electrician and artist, volunteering 1,027 hours at **Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, GA**. In 2007, a fire destroyed two canoe platforms on the refuge. Jack led a team of ten to rebuild the shelters in the remote wilderness that is accessible only by boat, using primitive tools to reduce environmental impact.

Jack designed and built an elaborate mobile educational exhibit, saving the refuge over \$10,000. When the refuge's bookstore was closed due to wildfire danger, he designed a souvenir t-shirt that helped raise \$25,000 for the refuge. For the past 22 years, Jack has given an average of 32 hours per week for eight months each year.

Take Pride in America in Southern Nevada has formed an effective partnership among the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**, the National Park Service and the University of Nevada -- Las Vegas to clean up litter and protect Nevada from future pollution. Through a campaign called "Don't Trash Nevada," designed by students from the university, 1,435 volunteers gave 6,085 hours at 31 cleanup events, removing 1,953 cubic yards of waste from public lands.

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

The Service's Refuge System Birding Initiative aims to strengthen the relationship between birders and the Refuge System. A partnership between the Service and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, which grew out of this initiative, will increase opportunities for quality bird watching on refuges. Activities include feeder and nest watch programs on refuges, citizen science projects and eBird Tracker, an online, interactive network of computer kiosks where visitors can record sightings, consult video field guides and check bird lists.

American Hiking Society

As the voice for our nation's hikers, the American Hiking Society promotes and protects foot trails and the hiking experience. Through Volunteer Vacations and [National Trails Day®](#), both nationally recognized programs, the Society helps keep our trails open, safe and enjoyable. The Service partnered with the Society through the Volunteer Vacations program to do projects on national wildlife refuges.

Volunteers at **Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, Maine**, pruned and removed trees and maintained 10 - 15 miles of wilderness and other refuge trails in the Baring and Edmunds divisions of the refuge.

At **Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, MT**, volunteers finished the Odell Creek Trail, the only access to public lands in the area. The trail goes through a forested part of the refuge to State of Montana, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service lands.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The Refuge System's 177 coastal refuges are home to abundant birds, fish, and marine wildlife. Unfortunately, tons of marine debris also washes up on refuge shores every year. It ranges from hundreds of tons of small plastics covering entire shorelines to large abandoned vessels wrecked on coasts and reefs. For almost two decades, volunteers on the **Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuges, HI**, through a partnership with NOAA, have collected and recorded marine debris, including lost commercial fishing gear and a variety of plastic trash.



For more information about volunteer opportunities near you, contact:

Region 1 - Northwest (Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Pacific Territories, Washington)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
911 NE 11th Avenue
Eastside Federal Complex
Portland, OR 97232-4181
503/872 2700

Region 2 - Southwest (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306
505/248 6635

Region 3 - Midwest (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1 Federal Dr., Federal Building
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111
612/713 5167

Region 4 - Southeast (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Blvd., NW
Atlanta, GA 30345
Volunteers: 404/679 7170
Friends: 404/679 7356

Region 5 - Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035-9589
413/253 8527

Region 6 - Mountain-Prairie (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Denver Federal Center
P.O. Box 25486
Denver, CO 80225
Volunteers: 303/236 4392
Friends: 303/236 4395

Region 7 - Alaska

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503
907/786 3391

Region 8 - California-Nevada

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, W-2606
Sacramento, CA 95825
916/414 6464

Region 9 - National (Washington, DC)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System 4401
N. Fairfax Ave., Room 670
Arlington, VA 22203
Volunteers: 703/358 2386
Friends: 703/358 2392

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>