



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Inside Region 3

June 2008

75th Anniversary Federal Duck Stamp

Inside This Issue:

Safety First

Kevin Brennan: Refuge Manager of the Year!

2007 Recovery Champions!

Sled Dog Marathon Winner

Civil Servants of the Year



Photo cover courtesy of Joe Hautman, the 2008-2009
Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner.

Editor's Note:

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

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

Next month we will introduce another regular section: Kid's Corner. Kid's corner will feature the nature writing and photographic pieces by the children of regional employees.

E-mail: valerie_redmond@fws.gov

On the Cover: The 2008-2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner.

Save the Date: Saturday, July 12, 2008
Join Joe Hautman, the 2008-2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner, for his home state celebration of the 75th Anniversary Federal Duck Stamp. Meet the Artist and Celebrate Wildlife Conservation Art at the Gainey Conference Center of the University of St. Thomas 2480 S. County Road 45, Owatonna, MN 55060 507-446-4460.

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From the USFWS Virtual Newsroom



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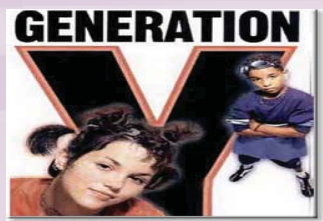
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From the Regional Director

The US Fish and Wildlife Service made international news last month when, for the first time in the history of the Endangered Species Act, a species was added to the list based on threats attributable to global climate change. The determination that polar bears are a threatened species was the top story for TV, magazines, radio and conversations.

Is an ESA action about the status of polar bears might relevant to our Midwest assignments and work? I think so. Regardless of the region of our planet, climate change has the potential to impact virtually everything we do, and species and their habitats might indicate the first signals of these impacts. Fish, wildlife, and plant species will react to changes in climate with alterations to migrations and other patterns or cycles. Some species will find their ranges expand or contract. Some hunters and anglers might discover that fish and game are less abundant or more abundant, or perhaps partially supplanted by unfamiliar species. Some lands will become drier, others wetter,

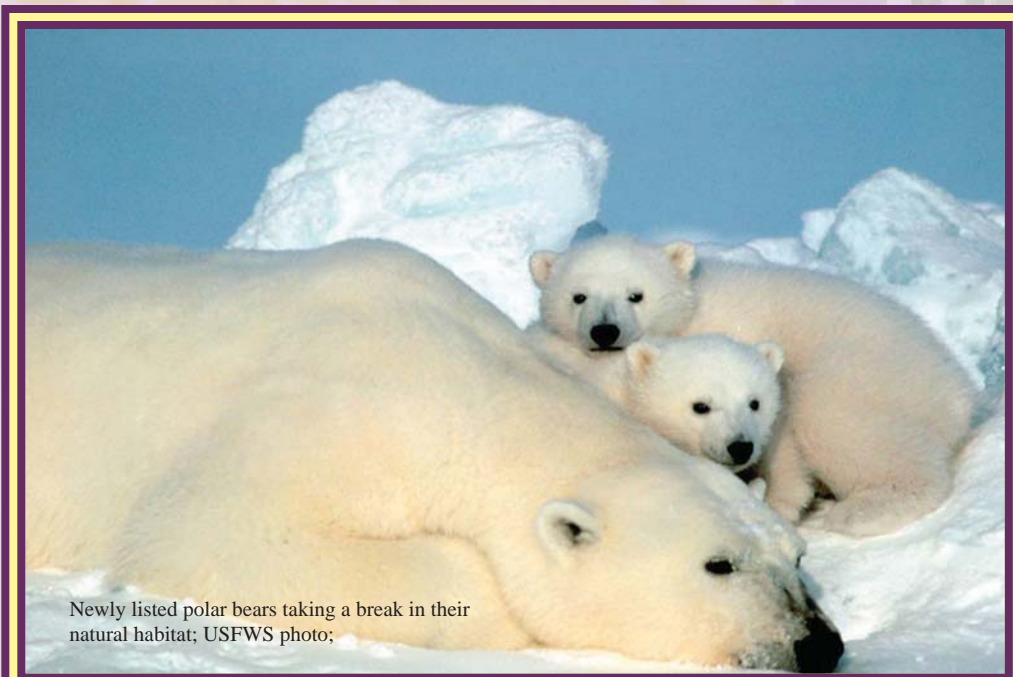
and plant and wildlife communities will change in response to these habitat shifts.

The Midwest region is identifying drivers and impacts of global climate change to help us learn how to best engage on this issue. Teresa Woods, Special Assistant to the Regional Director, leads a team exploring Midwest climate change issues, including the science, the projections, the concerns, and the role of the Service. Teresa hosts a monthly Communications Forum, which are conference call discussions to help us listen and learn from each other, from partners, and to hear from experts, scientists and leaders on this topic. Capitalizing on the expertise available at outstanding academic institutions in the Midwest, we will participate in an Academic Forum with Indiana University starting in September. We hope to expand this type of collaboration to other Midwest Universities. Teresa's team is also planning a Policy Forum early next year

to focus on agriculture and energy, two major drives of climate change issues in our Midwest landscapes.

As the world watches for how polar bears are faring, the Midwest Region is working to advance our knowledge, identify impacts, and best position ourselves to address climate change and conserve natural resources. To find out more, contact Teresa Woods (Teresa_Woods@fws.gov). We value your ideas and your concerns for the health of our Midwest as we address new challenges and new opportunities in the face of global climate change.

--Robyn Thorson



Newly listed polar bears taking a break in their natural habitat; USFWS photo;

Mark Your Calendars!

The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest is coming to Minnesota!

October 17-18, 2008

Bloomington Art Center

Bloomington, Minn.

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

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

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

Kevin Brennan: Refuge Manager of the Year!

Kevin Brennan, manager of the Fergus Falls (MN) Wetland Management District was honored as the National Wildlife Refuge Association's 2008 Refuge Manager of the Year at a ceremony held March 27 in Phoenix, Ariz.

Brennan was honored for his achievements during his 34 year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "I was somewhat overwhelmed to receive this award," said Brennan.

As manager at the Fergus Falls WMD, Brennan manages 218 waterfowl production areas covering more than 44,000 acres in five counties. During his career Brennan has been able to permanently protect more than 17,000 acres of wetlands and grasslands in the Fergus Falls WMD area. "It is rewarding to think that we played some

part in ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to see a flight of ducks rise from a wetland and fly over native prairies," said Brennan.

In addition to protecting and managing habitat to preserve wildlife, Brennan has also made helping children share his love of wildlife a priority throughout his career. Brennan in cooperation with many local individuals helped establish the Fergus Falls Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. The Center is the Refuge System's only residential education facility and is home to the one-of-a-kind Prairie Science Class. The Prairie Science Class brings Fergus Falls School District students out on the landscape everyday and incorporates math, science and other studies into real world situations.

A native of Hillsboro, N.D., Brennan graduated from the University of North Dakota with a B.S. degree in Fish and Wildlife Management. He began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Devils Lakes Wetland Management District and started his current position at Fergus Falls in 1986.

Brennan says he's seen many positive changes in how waterfowl and wildlife are managed during his years with the USFWS. "The realization that private landowners can have such a positive impact on wildlife populations and water quality has been very significant," said Brennan. "We no longer just focus on individual parcels of land; we have to work at a landscape level."

Another significant change has been the understanding that natural processes are resilient. "When I started my career, if a wetland had been drained, we were discouraged from restoring and protecting it," said Brennan. "We now know that if you break a drain tile and properly treat and manage the surrounding uplands, a drained wetland basin and its associated uplands will have significant wildlife and ecological value again in just a few years."

Brennan says that because of what he's seen during his career, and what he sees in the faces of the children at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, he's both thankful for what the National Wildlife Refuge System has done and is optimistic about the future.



Above: Kevin Brennan.

--Chuck Traxler
External Affairs

Safe and Secure Workplace Safety



Wear life jackets in open water!

Wear safety glasses to protect your eyes.

Always alert, nobody hurt!



Safety First

Safety Recipe: How to Bake Your Job Safe

A good safety recipe requires a few key ingredients. To cook up a safe working environment, blend proper training, personal protection equipment, the right tools and knowledge of the hazards associated with a job. Safety is a 24/7 profession that must be practiced everywhere and every time. On the menu are “safety tips” that apply on and off the job:

- Wear safety glasses/goggles when using grinding wheels, weed, whips, or any type of pneumatic tools.
- Use the right tool for the job. Do not use a screwdriver as a punch, pry bar, chisel or nail puller. Do not use wrenches as hammers.
- Always use the three-point rule when climbing ladders.
- Be certain all guards are in place before using woodworking machines.
- Always lift with you legs; not your back.
- Drive defensively.
- Visit the Region 3 Safety Web page. View monthly safety articles, job hazard analyses, and safety programs.

Bake your job safe. Always use the right safety ingredients while working on or off the job.

Visit us online at:
<https://intranet.fws.gov/region3/safety>

--Division of Safety, Health and Environmental Compliance

Offices Look Too Safe!

Compare to the molten metal and massive machines found in other workplaces, office hazards seem pretty tame. However, each year an estimated 40,000 workers receive disabling injuries from office accidents. In addition, there are many more cases of bad backs, skin rashes and bruises that go unreported.

Falls

The leading causes of office injuries are slipping, tripping and falling. Sound familiar? Falls are also a big cause of incidents in the plant and at any job site. Falls from the same level can cause more incidents and injuries than falls from ladders or scaffolds, and they can happen just as easily in the office as anywhere.

Here are some ways to prevent falls:

- Keep the office free from clutter. Boxes should be stacked out of the way of traffic in the proper storage area. Trash and spills should be cleaned up from the floor.
- Re-route electrical cords away from traffic areas.
- Report and repair any defective chairs. Be extra careful with chairs that has wheels on them.
- Close drawers so nobody will trip over them. A trip over an open drawer can cause much worse injuries than just bruised shins.
- If you see loose carpeting, close off the area and report it.
- Don't use makeshift ladders such as boxes stacked on chairs. Use stepladders and stepstools correctly.
- Hold on to the hand railing when walking up and down steps.

Fires

- Know where to find the fire extinguishers and know how to use them.
- Post emergency numbers, first aid

contacts and evacuation procedures for your office where everyone will be sure to see them.

- Do not overload electrical circuits.
- Use appropriate protective equipment, such as such as gloves or safety eyewear when handling these products.

Safe Lifting

A worker might consistently make a conscious effort to safely lift loads in the warehouse because he is prepared for the possibility of injury. The same person can be injured by lifting a box of envelopes. They are not expecting to get hurt in an office environment and fail to lift properly.

- Don't lift a load you cannot handle, such as office furniture or equipment.
- Plan your lift carefully so that your leg muscles, rather than your back, handle most of the load.
- Don't twist your body even when lifting a light load.
- Make sure your back is straight and your footing is secure. Use ladder and step stool safely.

Heavy Objects

- Filing cabinets can cause serious injury. Open just one drawer at a time. If you open more than that, you risk the cabinet falling over onto you. Load filing cabinet drawers evenly, starting with the bottom ones.
- Make sure shelves are securely anchored, and do not overload them. Do not place heavy objects on overhead shelves.

Office Entanglements

- Long hair, jewelry and loose clothing are all potentially hazardous around office equipment. They can become entangled in moving parts of typewriters, computer printers, postage meters and other equipment.

--Reprinted from the DOI Safety site, <http://www.osmre.gov/safety/safety021502.pdf>

From Hot to Cold: Jami Markle Wins Sled Dog Marathon

In 1999, Jami Markle was working for the Forest Service and heard from fellow employees, a large commercial dog sledding kennel in Grand Marias, Minnesota. "I had heard about it word of mouth from other people who worked for the Forest Service and that had worked for Jorgenson in years past and said it was a really neat experience," Markle explained. That winter when Markle's season with the Forest Service had ended, he took a job as a handler and guide, training the dogs and guiding visitors through the trails.

The next winter he worked at a smaller kennel that was focused on racing. After working as a handler for larger races, Markle was the dog team driver, or musher, for smaller races at the end of the season.

"Then I moved to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service and I met Steve Peterson." Markle said. Peterson owns a small kennel near Lakeville.

Markle raced with Peterson in the winter of 2007 as a handler for the John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon Mid-Distance Race, that commemorates the life of John Beargrease, who delivered mail by dog sled along Lake Superior's rugged North Shore in the late 19th century.

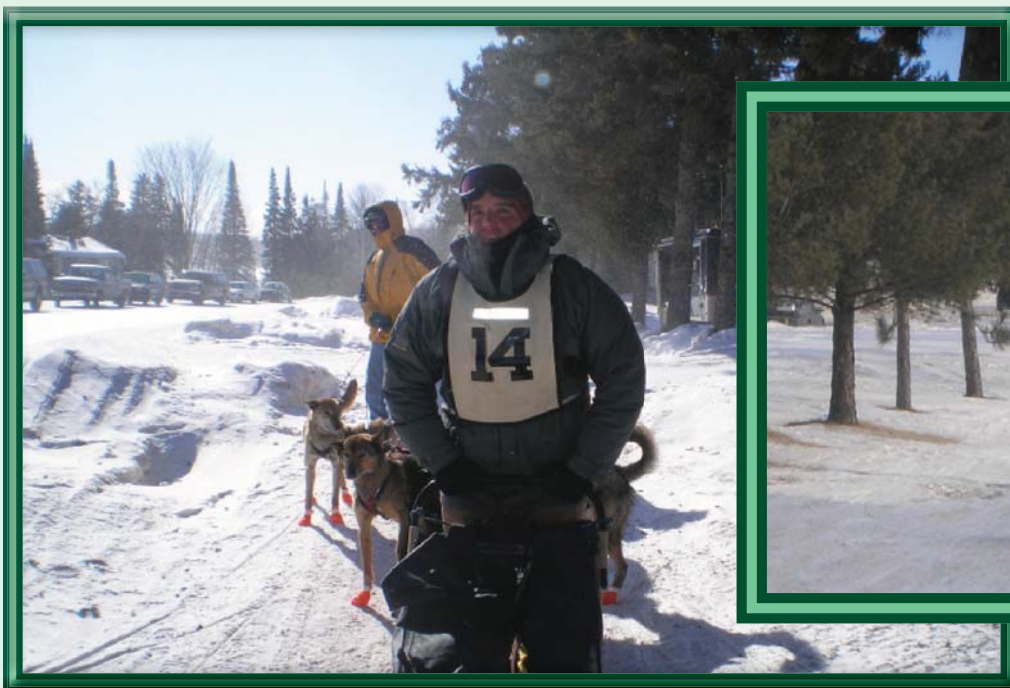
At the beginning of the 150-mile Beargrease Race, Markle's role as the handler was to prepare the dogs and equipment and get them to the starting line. Once the race started Markle would meet the team at each check point. He would have food and a resting place for both dogs and musher, he would also perform repairs to equipment.

As a reward for Markle's hard work at the Beargrease, Peterson let Markle run his dog team the Mid-Minnesota Classic and the Wolf Track Classic. In the Mid-Minnesota Race, Markle and Peterson changed roles, with Markle

as the musher and Peterson as the handler. Markle started the race in last place, and despite some nasty weather he came in first.

After graduating from Northland College in Wisconsin with a four year degree in environmental studies, Jami Markle started his career as a Wilderness Ranger for the Forest Service in 1999. In 2002 he took a permanent position with the Forest Service Fire and Forestry division. He started his Fish and Wildlife Service career in 2005 at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge as the Fire Crew Lead and later became a Fire Program Technician at Minnesota Valley.

*-Juliana Jindra
External Affairs*



Above: Jami Markle and his dogs.

Let's Go Outside!

So What Do You Do in the Winter?

As a biologist at a northern duty station where most surface waters remain frozen for nearly half the year, I am frequently asked by friends and family at winter holiday gatherings “What do you and your colleagues do at work this time of year?”

“Typical office work,” is my less than enthusiastic reply. Fortunately, the co-location of the La Crosse National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office with five other Fish and Wildlife Service offices in Onalaska, Wis., provides occasional opportunities for Fishery program employees to leave their office “dens,” where they might otherwise “hibernate” for the winter, and resume work in the outdoors by participating in cross-program activities.

I decided to help the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge’s La Crosse District staff complete landscaping activities at the recently constructed Browns Marsh overlook, adjacent to the Great River State Trail along the Mississippi River. I’d worked seasonal jobs decades ago restoring and maintaining prairie habitats and it was a youth-replenishing tonic for my conservation spirit.

Lest my body think that it too had found a fountain of youth, I was reminded of my middle-age status by the end of the day after crawling for hours on hands and knees to cover the seeds with a protective layer of straw held in place by countless staples chiseled into the mostly frozen ground.

This winter at holiday gatherings, friends and family likely noticed that I gave a more enthusiastic response when asked the proverbial question, “So what do you do in the winter?”

--Mark Steingraeber, La Crosse National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Onalaska, Wis.

A Wild Bachelor Party!

It was a wild bachelor party in Columbia, Mo., according to threatened and endangered species coordinator, Paul McKenzie. A summer bachelor colony of 38 Indiana bats assembled in a St. Louis gated cave. A flurry of excitement took to the air as the bachelors got wind that a maternal colony was near by. McKenzie indicates that it is the largest Indiana bat bachelor colony in a cave that the Service is aware of in the state. FWS will continue to monitor activity in the cave and try to locate funds to put up a better gate. “The manager tells us that these bats have been there for a couple of years,” reports McKenzie. It appears that the action is endless, as McKenzie indicates the colony is used by the bachelors for the whole summer.

--Valerie Rose Redmond External Affairs



Above: Mark Steingraeber fights cabin fever by laying straw erosion mat to cover newly planted seeds. Photo by Calvin Gehri/USFWS.

2007 Recovery Champion Awards

Our People

Director H. Dale Hall announced the 16 recipients of the Service's 2007 Recovery Champion award which recognizes outstanding contributions of Service employees and their partners toward efforts aimed at recovering threatened and endangered species in the United States.

"The Recovery Champion award not only recognizes the exceptional conservation accomplishments of the honorees, it also provides the public with a unique opportunity to learn about endangered species conservation," said Hall. "These Recovery Champions

are extraordinary conservationists dedicated to protecting and restoring our nation's wildlife and ensuring that future generations of Americans enjoy the national treasures we experience today."



Topeka Shiner Recovery

Douglas Bos is recognized for his contributions to the recovery of the Topeka shiner. His efforts have been instrumental in bringing county feedlots into compliance with the State's feedlot rules, achieving reduced levels of runoff that are positively affecting the water quality and habitat of this endangered native fish. Bos' leadership has brought together government agencies and private enterprises to leverage each partner's efforts to achieve greater protection for the Topeka shiner and other aquatic species. It is in large part through his ability to attain this level of cooperation among all stakeholders that the Topeka shiner is coming back from the brink of extinction.

Whooping Crane Recovery

John Christian's Recovery Champion award is based on his dedication to the recovery of the whooping crane. His tireless efforts have brought together a diverse group of partners to create an organization that has led a reintroduction and recovery effort for the crane. This endeavor has overseen raising young whooping cranes to providing intensive flight training at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, and through long and occasionally dangerous trips, leading the endangered birds to their wintering grounds in the Florida peninsula. These efforts have resulted in a substantial growth in the population of the species, including milestone events such as the first successful nesting and fledging of a whooping crane east of the Mississippi River in over 80 years.

*--Excerpted from the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Virtual Newsroom*



Above: L to R: Robyn, Doug, Lori Stevenson and Sheldon Myerchin; Inset: John Christian;

Awards

Celebrating Excellence

A Real Life Saver

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge employee Susan Cooper was presented the Exemplary Service Award, for her prompt decision and quick action resulting in saving the life of another. On September 11, 2007 Susan saw another employee in trouble some distance away. She immediately rushed to him and attempted to stop a severely bleeding injury. She then called for help and kept control of the situation until he was flown to the hospital. If Susan had not acted quickly, decisively, a life would have been lost that day. The award was presented at the refuge's 50th anniversary celebration by Regional Director Robyn Thorson.



Above: Susan beams as she is presented with the Exemplary Service Award. L to R: Charlie Wooley, George Oliver, Susan Cooper, Robyn Thorson.

2008 Refuge Friends Group of the Year

The nonprofit group Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge was honored as the National Wildlife Refuge Association's 2008 Refuge Friends Group of the Year at a ceremony held recently in West Virginia.

The group increased community awareness and support for the refuge through

a new Visitor Center on the refuge. Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Manager Anne Sittauer, who nominated the group for the award, has come to rely heavily on them for assistance. "Without this group, the refuge simply could not provide the high-quality visitor services and community support the citizens of this area deserve," said Sittauer. "Bottom line, without our Friends group, we'd be in tough shape. I can't thank them enough for everything they do."

Friends gather for wildlife drive at Sherburne NWR.



The Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge's stated mission is that they believe the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is a unique natural resource that can help the community develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Refuge and its mission.

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge consists of 30,700 acres of public land that represents a diverse biological community characteristic of the transition zone between tallgrass prairie and forest. The refuge was established to protect and restore the habitats associated with the St. Francis River Valley for migratory birds and other wildlife purposes. The focus of the Refuge is on the restoration of oak savanna, wetland, and big woods habitats.

their co-sponsorship of six popular annual events, membership in four local Chambers of Commerce, participation in local fire safety and environmental education programs,

the production and distribution of refuge-related guides and brochures, purchased and donated 88 acres to Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the development of an informative and interactive website, and most recently, through a commitment to build

To learn more about the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, visit their website at <http://www.exploresherburne.org>.

--Chuck Traxler, External Affairs

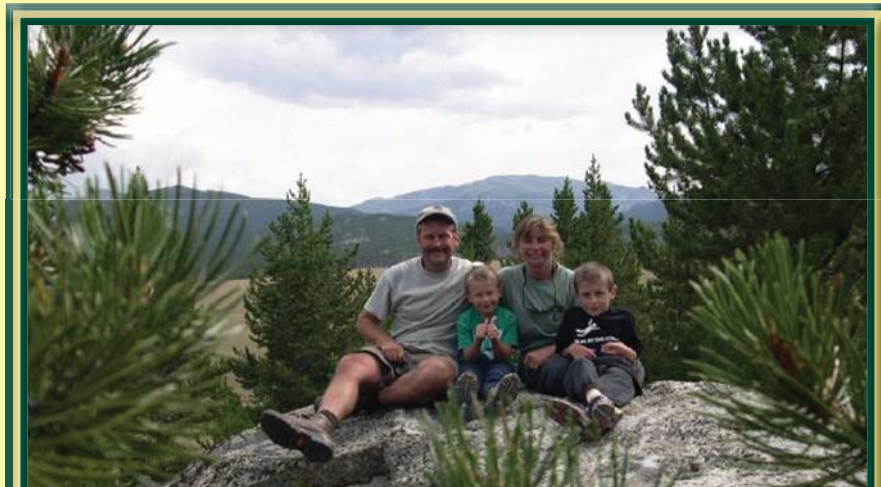
Friends, Friends, and More Friends

As park ranger and volunteer friends coordinator for Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Tim Haller, definitely has his hands full. He facilitates educational programs on the refuge, and along the Missouri river including the Junior Duck Stamp program and Free Fishing Days. “I like getting kids out on the refuge and allowing them to experience the outdoors,” Haller says.

He says it’s important to gather strong support from partners and friends who can help you carry the program farther than the service alone. Haller looks to the friends group and volunteers such as the Missouri Master Naturalist to help on most outings. “I have had some good success soliciting funding from outside the agency.”

Haller studied environmental education at Southern Oregon State University and recreation/resource management at Northeast Missouri State University. He is married with two children.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs



Above, Top:
The Hallers; L-R Tim, Hayden, Kerry and Dillon

Above, Middle:
Mark Steingraeb as part of the National Wildlife Refuge Association’s Annual Refuge Friends Conference, more than 150 Friends Group volunteers from 108 refuges and 40 states met with legislators on Capitol Hill, April 7. Midwest Region Refuge Chief Nita Fuller summed up her experience this way, “Our Midwest Region Friends are outstanding!”

The Multi-Generational Workforce: *Appreciating Different Approaches*

Generation Y: 1981-2000

Most of us think they are precocious, and perhaps they have a right to be. They are the largest consumer group in the United States, but they are also more committed to volunteering in their communities than any other generation in our history. They are both altruistic and individualistic, and hold very strong opinions regarding issues such as poverty, the environment and community problems. They celebrate diversity – perhaps because they have been immersed in it their entire lives.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 and the school shootings at Columbine made a grave impression upon them. According to various research studies, these events persuaded this generation that nothing can be taken for granted and each day should be lived to its fullest.

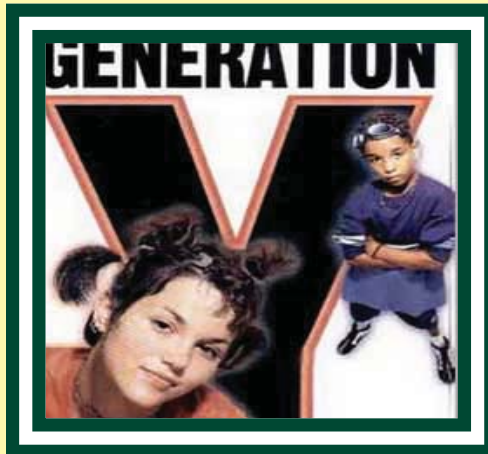
Technology--cells and blackberries and ipods--are not just tools for this generation, but rather essentials, as necessary as water.

It has been stated that this generation of young people is most like the Silent Generation. They cherish strong ties to family and friends and are very emphatic about the need for roots. They respect their elders.

This generation is very upset about the state of the world. Most of them wholeheartedly believe in climate change and the imperative need to develop and cultivate alternative energy sources. Many of them feel that one of the nation's first priorities should be eliminating the federal deficit, and are very opinionated about the benefits of international trade agreements such as NAFTA.

Education as a tool for career development and enhancement is very

important to Generation Y. Many of them are the offspring of Generation X, the most educated generation in the history of this country. In an age in which the public education system has faced strict scrutiny and accountability standards, they are very aware of the importance of learning. They believe that everything they do academically, from kindergarten on, counts toward their future and can serve as a building block for character development. However, many of them view a college degree as beyond their financial reach. They see college as an increasingly expensive and competitive option and are unafraid to embrace alternative paths toward reaching their goals. Their spirit of volunteerism is something they believe others should appreciate and



reward. This is perhaps why so many of them are disenchanted with the current political system and have chosen to stand behind candidates that echo these sentiments.

How can this generation be prepared to transition into positions of leadership? Their energy and enthusiasm can sometimes be exhausting. They are unafraid of change and view it as a reflection of the natural order of things. They are diplomatic, tactful and have more respect for authority than Generation X. However, they

will not shy away from challenging the status quo. Like Gen X, they are believe that education and initiative should carry as much weight as age and experience. They want employment that is “fun.” The career motivation for this generation is finding a position or a calling that brings them fulfillment.

--Andrea Kirk, *Migratory Birds*



A sure sign that the ice is finally breaking up on Minnesota lakes is a glimpse of pelicans. The pelicans arrive in Minnesota from wintering areas primarily near the Gulf of Mexico. They are large birds with wings spans of 6 to 9 ft and usually weigh between 10 and 17 lbs. According to the Minnesota DNR, Marsh Lake has the biggest nesting colony of these birds.

The above picture s the spring migration from Guide Kim Rizer of Frontenac State Park near Frontenac, MN along US 61.

--Andrea Kirk, *Migratory Birds*

See Duck Stamp Dollars At Work

Visit A WPA

The Midwest has a long tradition of wildlife conservation, waterfowl hunting and arts appreciation. These traditions will come together as Minnesota hosts—for the first time—the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest.

The contest will be held Oct. 17 and 18 in Bloomington, Minn. A number of events sponsored by the Service and its partners will take place during the weeks leading up to the contest. For more information and a calendar of events, go to <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/2008contest.htm>.

Buying a Duck Stamp is easy—just grab \$15 and head to your local post office, sporting goods store or <http://www.duckstamp.com>. Seeing the benefits of Duck Stamps is easy, too – just grab a pair of binoculars and head to one of the Midwest Region’s many waterfowl production areas.

Since the inception of the Federal Duck Stamp in 1934, sales of Duck Stamps have generated more than \$700 million to acquire and preserve more than 5.2 million acres of migratory waterfowl habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. No other program can match that cost-effectiveness.

Ninety-eight percent of Duck Stamp proceeds goes directly toward acquiring wetland and grassland habitat for birds, endangered and threatened species, and other wildlife. You can see the benefits of Federal Duck Stamps at national wildlife refuges across the nation.

You can also see the benefits at waterfowl production areas (WPAs) dotting the upper Midwest. The Service’s Small Wetlands Program, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, uses Duck Stamp dollars to acquire high-quality wetland and grassland habitat across the Prairie Pothole Region. These tracts are managed as part of the refuge system, protecting habitat for grassland nesting songbirds, shorebirds, wading birds and waterfowl. Many are open to the public for wildlife-dependent recreation including hunting, fishing, bird watching, photography and environmental education.



In the 50 years since the Service began protecting waterfowl production areas, the Small Wetlands Program has been used to acquire more than 695,000 acres in fee and perpetually protect an additional 2.1 million acres by easements – all paid for using Duck Stamp dollars.

Take the time to visit one of these gems and see the habitat and wildlife they conserve. Then come to the Duck Stamp contest in October to see how it all begins. To find out more about WPAs, go to <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/smallwetlands/>.

Mark Your Calendars!

Home State Celebration of the 75th Anniversary

Federal Duck Stamp Artist

Saturday, July 12, 2008

The Gainey Conference Center of the

University of St. Thomas - Owatonna, Minn.

Join Joe Hautman, the 2008-2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest Winner, for his home state celebration of the 75th Anniversary Federal Duck Stamp.

New Beginnings

It's a Spring Thing

Sturgeon Spawning Begins Anew

People from across the country are drawn to eastern Wisconsin every spring to witness one of nature's most impressive events, the Wolf River sturgeon spawning run. Thousands of lake sturgeon, some approaching 6 feet long and weighing over 200 pounds, migrate up the Wolf River yearly to reproduce.



The Wolf River system contains one of the largest and healthiest lake sturgeon populations remaining in the country. It is also one of the state's most prized and studied possessions, with biologists from across the country gathering to study sturgeon reproductive biology. Sturgeon enthusiasts study everything from propagation techniques to milt cryopreservation in attempts to restore this long-lived species to its historic range.

Lake sturgeon are listed as threatened in many states due to barriers that limit access to traditional spawning sites, over-fishing, pollution and habitat destruction. Lake sturgeon reach production age at 18 to 22 years old, and therefore recovery of declining populations can take many years. The Genoa National Fish Hatchery, in cooperation with the LaCrosse Fishery Resource Office, the LaCrosse Fish Health Center, the Menominee Indian Tribe and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, has worked to restore lake sturgeon on Reservation land since 1994.

The Genoa National Fish Hatchery restocked Menominee Reservation waters with cultured sturgeon from the lower Wolf River, which has established new population in Legend Lake. This is the first time sturgeon have been released in Reservation

waters since 1892. Through these cooperative efforts, Lake Sturgeon can once again be found in waters of the Menominee Reservation, and an important species to the Menominee tribe and the people of Wisconsin is being restored to its native range.



--Doug Aloisi
Genoa National Fish Hatchery

Rescue Day Success at Union Slough NWR

The air was cool and damp on Saturday April 19, as seven people headed to one of Union Slough Refuge's remnant prairies, Deer Meadow, in dire need of attention. It was all part of Prairie Rescue Day, a



statewide celebration of Iowa's prairies. Union Slough was one of about 20 sites across the state that hosted a Prairie Rescue Day Event. Even though participant turnout was low, a lot was accomplished in a few hours. Small trees were dropped and plum thickets were cleared, both encroaching in on a remnant prairie that had never been plowed. A woodcock was even spotted, holding tightly to its spot among the brush. After the four-hour work period, everyone was treated to a terrific meal, followed by a drive along the auto tour. The greatest reward was the discovery of several pasque flowers, one of the first blooming wildflowers of the year just emerging from the cool soil. Three days following the Prairie Rescue Event, firefighters from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a prescribed burn in the Prairie Rescue location. Hopes are that as a result of the clearing and burning, Deer Meadow will finally look like a prairie again.

--Rebecca Esser, *Union Slough NWR*

Celebrating Excellence



Above: Romero with wife, Debbie and his two boys, Julian and Quinton.

Wildlife biologist, Fabian Romero joined the Service family as a cooperative education student in 1979. At the time he was studying wildlife biology in New Mexico. Eager to build his skill base, he learned that the Service was offering student field work opportunities in Fisheries, Ecological Services and Refuges. Romero wanted to work for the Service because of its focus on natural resources, “[It] would be a great place to get experience in my field of study,” he explains. After a three year co-op phase, he joined the Service as a permanent employee.

Born in Taos, New Mexico, Romero has lived in the Twin Cities area for 18 years. His first introduction to the region was at the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

At present, he is a grant administrator in the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Division where his primary responsibilities are to review and process grant proposals. He works with the 8 states in the region to administer wildlife restoration, sport fish restoration, and state wildlife grants.

“I really enjoy the work I do in the WSFR program particularly with

hunter education and aquatic education grants as I strongly believe the activities conducted through these programs exposes many young participants not only to fishing and hunting but to outdoor experiences that might not otherwise be available to them,” says Romero.

Romero is married and is father to two boys, Julian, 15 and Quinton, 10. Wife, Debbie, is very proud of her husband for being honored as a Civil Service Servant of the Year award recipient. But Romero, humbled by it all, said that he “was surprised and honored to receive this award.”

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

The Civil Servant of the Year Awards

The Civil Servant of the Year Award annually recognizes and honors government employees for outstanding contributions and exceptional performance in the previous fiscal year. This year’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife honorees are Fabian Romero of Wildlife and Sport

Fish Restoration (WSFR) and Gina Martinez of Budget and Finance.

Romero, a grant administrator for WSFR, was recognized for his exceptional administration of Hunter Education, a training program that provides firearms safety and ethics instruction to more than 25,000 youngsters across seven states. Romero not only oversaw the \$8,000,000 Hunter Education program last year, but also managed to facilitate arduous negotiations for a six-year \$45,000,000 fish and wildlife management grant. His influence in seemingly impossible dispute resolutions led to an even larger grant. As a result, he was asked to serve as an expert on a state hiring panel.

Martinez, a financial program specialist for Budget and Finance and a leader in supporting the Midwest Region’s financial management needs, was recognized for serving as a lead instructor for financial management courses at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. Martinez also served on a nationwide team convened to improve cost documentation processes and helped to fortify collection processes.

--Valerie Rose Redmond
External Affairs

What’s Going On?

As part of the Midwest region’s Special Emphasis Programming, Federal Women’s Program, last month, Debra Orbuch Grayson presented a seminar on Job Stress and Burnout and Achieving a Healthy Work Life Balance.

Minnesota Valley NWR hosted the 18th Annual Urban Youth Fishing Day on Saturday, May 31. To read more on this impressive event, see next month’s issue.

Around the Region

Below: Former University of MN-Crookston graduate student, and current TNC botanist, Tyler Janke assisting two field assistants with his project dealing with the vegetative diversity of restored wetlands on Glacial Ridge NWR lands.



Above: USFWS staffers Tony Batya (left) and Brian Pember (right), with their newly rescued friend.
- Photo courtesy Beth Carrier, Pet Medical Center, Winona, Minn.



Above: The National Eagle Center, located in Wabasha, Minnesota celebrated the bald eagle with their annual Soar with Eagles celebration. Volunteer Ericka Overgard handing out Refuge information. Photo by Ed Lagace,



Left: Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) staff from Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio met in north-east Indiana to address mutual conservation goals and challenges, including habitat restoration efforts to help recover the federally threatened Copperbelly Water Snake (CWS).
Photo courtesy Jim Hudgins, USFWS;

Celebrating Excellence

Conserving the Warblers

The Kirtland's warbler field trip held on Saturday, May 31 was a great success, and the Wisconsin birding list serve is filled with effusive praise of how FWS, DNR, Wildlife Services, and Plum Creek Timber Company are all working together so well to conserve the warblers.

--Louise Clemency
Wisconsin Ecological Services Office



Left: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) members viewing a Kirtland's warbler. Photo by Patti Trick.

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Quote of the Month

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts --Rachel Carson

2008 Refuge Photo Contest



Above: Richard Henry of Bemidji, MN for photo of Male Yellow Warbler, Tamarac NWR, MN;

Below: Les Zigurski of Scales Mound, IL for photo of Bald Eagle with Catch of the Day,



Regional Photographers Receive Honorable Mention

More than 2,000 images from over 150 refuges from 45 states and territories were submitted to this third annual Refuge Photo Contest. These Midwest photographers will receive three field guides from Houghton Mifflin, including "Good Birders Don't Wear White" by Pete Dunne.

Images from the contest will be added to the NWRA Refuge Image Library, a gallery of high quality photographs showcasing the rich and varied wildlife and habitat protected by our country's National Wildlife Refuge System. Congratulations to the winners for their spectacular images!

--Excerpted from the photography contest website. To see more, visit: <http://www.refugenet.org/contest/2008Winners.html>



Above: Daniel Kaiser of Columbus, IN for photo of River Otter on Ice, Muscatatuck NWR, IN;

Below: Carol Wolfe of Blacksburg, VA for photo of Dew-covered Damselfly, Seney NWR,



We are pleased to announce that the Fish and Wildlife Journal (aka. ARS) <http://ars.fws.gov> is once again fully functional, and ready to accept your journal reports AND photographs.

Errors that surfaced a couple of months ago after the Service switched to a new server for Intranet applications have all been resolved. Journal users should no longer experience multiple login windows, and you should be able to upload photographs with your reports.

Your patience with this process is very much appreciated. Thank You and please start entering your reports and photos again.