



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Friends and Volunteers

Annual Update FY 2007

People Making a Difference



Volunteers, Friends organizations and other partners are essential allies for many programs within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Every day these devoted individuals and organizations play vital roles in helping the Service fulfill its mission and many important goals. Each year, volunteers, Friends organizations, and partners generously give time, expertise and resources to the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Fish Hatcheries System, and other Service offices. They play an important role in helping serve over 40 million visitors who enjoy our public lands.

Volunteer assistance is significant. During Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, 37,881 volunteers donated 1,491,152 hours. The value of their labor was \$27,988,923. Using the Independent Sector's current dollar value of \$18.77, their in-kind services equaled the equivalent of 717 full-time employees. Our Friends organizations have steadily grown and are now more than 300.

Volunteers help the Service in a variety of ways. Some work full-time while others assist with a few hours a week or month, or during a special event. Many volunteers conduct fish and wildlife population surveys; band ducks; lead tours and provide information to school groups and other visitors; assist with laboratory research; work on cultural resources projects; perform clerical and administrative duties, work with computers and other technical equipment; and much more.

There is no better way to show you the value of our volunteers, Friends organizations and partners than to share some of their successes. These contributions are being made at Service sites from Alaska to Maine and from Hawaii to the Caribbean.

Volunteer Highlights

Volunteer John Bertrand is this year's recipient of the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Volunteer of the Year. John has volunteered over 11,650 hours with **Bosque del Apache NWR, NM**. Throughout his 14 years of service to the refuge, John has edited and published *Habitat!*, a statewide publication devoted to public opportunities and events on the refuge. John recently led the Friends' fundraising efforts to purchase a long

desired 140 acres of land adjacent to the refuge. In less than one year, John and the Friends raised the \$63,000 necessary to purchase the land for the refuge.

D.C. Booth Historical National Fish Hatchery, SD, expanded their volunteer village by adding 4 new campsites for their resident volunteer program. This has allowed the volunteer program to take on more volunteers to help with two new categories: museum collections and facilities maintenance. They also expanded their award winning Hatchery Helpers middle school summer volunteer program.



DC Booth NHHF volunteers participating in local parade

Ron and Pat Taylor contributed 1125 hours over a five month period at **Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, CA**. This busy couple maintained fences and boundary signs on many portions of the refuge. They removed trash and debris from refuge roads, parking lots, fishing docks, the refuge shop and office. Plastic bottles and cans were recycled thanks to Pat's efforts. They also helped staff with supply deliveries, equipment inventory, janitorial assistance, facility maintenance and general office needs, and last but not least helped the refuge biologist with watering planted mesquite seeds in one of the refuge sloughs.

The Morphology Section of the Forensics Laboratory in Ashland OR. had 12 volunteers in 2007. These invaluable volunteers assisted Unit Coordinators by conducting research, collection maintenance, and record keeping. The Bird Unit volunteers worked on their ongoing Feather Atlas Project. The Herpetology Unit volunteers helped update their scientific publications collection. The Mammal Unit volunteers established a new *dermestid* beetle colony, worked with animal carcasses seeing them through the process of becoming important comparative standards used in casework to identify

evidence, and one volunteer even co-authored a paper in the *Australian Mammalogy* journal on New Guinea Singing Dogs.

Over 1,500 students from first grade through college attended hatchery tours led by volunteers as part of the Adopt a Salmon Family Outreach Program run by the Central **New England Fishery Resources Office, NH**. The tour program was administered by 10 very dedicated volunteers without whom this program would not have been possible!



The Central New England Fishery Resources Office

Boy Scouts of America contributed significantly to the **Patuxent Research Refuge, MD**. Eleven scouts representing 9 local troops seeking to complete their Eagle Scout Leadership Service Projects successfully planned, fund-raised, acquired donations, and coordinated the following outdoor maintenance projects: two 100 ft sections of boardwalk, two fishing kiosks, hundreds of pounds of invasive plants removed, fishing pier decking and bench top renovations, 8 park benches for trails, 20 wood duck nest boxes, and 200 feet of trail maintenance. Over 300 volunteers (scouts and families included) contributed over 1700 hours towards these projects with over \$6000 worth of donated materials.



Invasive plant removal project at Patuxent Research Refuge- Troop 1688 National Capital Area Council

Most of the volunteers at the **Rio grande Ecological Field Office**, Puerto Rico, were assigned to maintenance duties which included: preparing their aviary for grand opening (cleaning, mowing lawn), preparing the aviary for the moving day (cleaning facilities, arranging the equipment and materials, cleaning), painting the hurricane room mural, and the moving day itself.

Friends Highlights

Friends are private, independent, community-based, not-for-profit organizations formed primarily by citizen volunteers who support the mission and purposes of a national wildlife refuge or other Service offices. These important allies advocate for their refuge or site by providing information to the local community and elected officials, encouraging community participation in programs, and building long-term support. They raise funds and provide volunteer staff for conservation work that might otherwise go undone. They assist with education programs and special events. Friends provide an essential link to the community to promote land stewardship. They contribute and leverage time, expertise and resources for the benefit of wildlife conservation. Every year their numbers grow.

The Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota was named Friends Group of the Year. The Sherburne Friends are extremely generous with their time, talent and funds. With grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Friends purchased 40 acres of wetland habitat that were donated to Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. In 2007 the group provided financial support for an intern in the Student Conservation Employment Program and has just launched a capital campaign to raise \$5 million for a new visitor center.

The Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, Florida start planning each January in anticipation of the fall migration of young and endangered whooping cranes from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. "The Friends are ready to do whatever it takes to keep this program moving forward," says Friends President Lace Blue-McLean.

The first-ever Friends Academy attracted Refuge Friends leaders from all around the country—and it was a rousing success. So successful, in fact,

that tentative 2008 plans call for two sessions to be held at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. Representatives of 19 Friends organizations and 24 national wildlife refuges in 17 states attended.

The Friends and Volunteers of Refuges, Florida Keys have enlisted in a broad campaign against invasive plants and animals. Left unchecked, invasives can crowd out flora that provides food for native species such as the endangered Key deer. The group is an active partner in a broad-based coalition, whose efforts have been certified by a state environmental agency that is implementing a hands-on "GreenThumb certified" campaign to weed out invasives.

Friends of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, Montana sold 200 specially-printed license plates soon after they became available. The Friends group receives \$20 for each one sold. The design features a great blue heron with the Bitterroot Mountains in the background and in the foreground, the Bitterroot Valley wetlands, where the Metcalf refuge is located. "Wildlife Refuges" is stamped at the bottom.

Partner Highlights

Each year the Service works with an ever-widening group of other organizations. In addition to new partners, long-time partners such as the Student Conservation Association and Take Pride in America, volunteer many hours in support of our projects.

Student Conservation Association

For over 20 years the Service and the Student Conservation Association (SCA) have been successful partners. SCA continues to provide service opportunities to young people at Service sites through its conservation crews that make up SCA's national high school programs, the Conservation Internship Program and the Conservation Corps Program.

In FY 07, SCA provided 122 members who served at 45 Service sites in 24 states for more than 80,000 hours. Of those 122 members, 18 were High School Crews, 67 were Resource Assistants and 37 were Conservation Associates.

Several examples are highlighted. A high school crew of 23 at **Kenai NWR** in Alaska completed 1,700 feet of new trail construction which included the building of a rock turnpike with man made crush, drainage, dips, steps, stepping stones,

and water bar construction. A 5-member team from SCA's Native Plant Corps served at **Imperial NWR** in Arizona combating invasive species and restoring native plant communities.

Take Pride in America

Take Pride in America is a national partnership program aimed at increasing volunteer service on America's public lands. It is the goal of Take Pride in America to empower volunteers from every corner of America to maintain and enhance our natural, cultural, and historical sites. Each year these volunteers are highlighted during a national awards ceremony held in Washington, D.C.

This year's Federal Land Manager of the Year for FWS went to Steve Brimm, Project Leader at the **D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery** in Spearfish, SD. As project leader, he has done an incredible job in developing community partnerships, working with the non-profit Booth Society and building an excellent volunteer program.

Glenn and Carolle Aldinger, volunteers at **Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge**, VA, received Take Pride in America's Volunteer of the Year in the Individual Category. They dedicated over 435 hours to the protection and enhancement of the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Throughout their service the couple cleaned and maintained a 4-mile bike trail, designed a public outreach program, and developed activities for children to enjoy. They also serve as Goodwill Ambassadors during special events and have instituted a monthly trash pick-up.

Center for Invasive Plant Management

In collaboration with the Center for Invasive Plant Management, the National Wildlife Refuge System has developed an invasive plant online training for volunteers. Designed for National Wildlife Refuge volunteers and Friends groups, the program provides science-based, introductory information that is suitable for anyone interested in learning about invasive plants. The five self-study modules address the purpose and history of the Refuge System, how refuges manage invasive plants and how volunteers are assisting them.

Massachusetts Audubon Society

One project made national news when it was featured on "The Early Show" on CBS (February 13th, 2007). **Parker River National Wildlife Refuge** in Massachusetts joined forces with the Massachusetts

Audubon Society to control perennial pepperweed. Volunteers helped to establish a control zone or “fire lane” north of the refuge where existing stands are a source of seeds that re-colonize refuge land and thwart efforts to preserve the marsh’s integrity.

The Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, MT, in partnership with the South Phillips County Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, used funding provided through a volunteers and invasives grant to wash vehicles during the 2007 hunting season. A portable wash system was rented and then manned by volunteers to wash vehicles of hunters entering and leaving the refuge. Recreational vehicles can be one of the most significant vectors for spreading invasive plants on public lands. This project deserves special recognition because it emphasizes prevention; stopping the problem before it starts.

Federal Legislation Authorizes 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 authorize the Fish and Wildlife Service to accept volunteer services. When the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act was reauthorized in 2004, Congress reaffirmed its interest and provided tools to help the Service involve the American people as stewards of our nation’s wildlife.

How Do I Find Out About Volunteer Opportunities With The FWS?

Visit our web site at www.fws.gov or call 1-800-344-WILD. Specific volunteer opportunities are posted at www.volunteer.gov/gov.

Volunteer built Nature Trail Observation Deck at Cibola NWR



Volunteers start young at Okefenokee NWR



Volunteers assisting with monitoring efforts on endangered humpback chub in the Little Colorado River.

Cover Photo: A Volunteer holds newly banded Red-cockaded woodpeckers.

All photos: USFWS

April 2009