



We Are The Pacific Southwest Region

Winter 2009

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Biological Science Technician Gabriella Dancourt holds a California condor during a medical and radio transmitter check-up at the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge

From the PSW Regional Director . . .

Greetings! With so much attention being given to the climate change in the news lately, I thought it would be a good time to tell you about events related to climate change taking place in Washington, DC and right here in the Pacific Southwest Region.

By now, many of you have heard about the Secretary of the Interior's recent order establishing a new Departmental climate change strategy. This strategy includes three items of interest to us in the Fish and Wildlife Service. The first is a new Climate Change Response Council, led by the Secretary, that will coordinate the Department's response to the impacts of climate change and work to improve the sharing and communication of climate change science. The second is the planned creation of eight regional Climate Change Response Centers to synthesize existing climate change impact data and management strategies, help resource managers put them into action on the ground, and engage the public through education and outreach.

The third element of the Secretary's order affects us directly. It calls for the establishment of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives that will involve Federal, State, and Tribal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and others in crafting practical, landscape-level conservation strategies to minimize the adverse effects of climate change on fish, wildlife, and their habitats. Modeled after the highly successful migratory bird joint ventures, these public-private cooperatives will support the Fish and Wildlife Service and our partners with science-based biological planning, conservation design, research, inventory and monitoring.

Our region is organizing one of

the first Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the country, the California LCC. Its initial focus will be on lands and waters within the watersheds of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, Tulare Lake, and San Francisco Bay. This area includes the Central Valley, foothills and western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, and coastal headlands that border San Francisco Bay. Later, we will expand its geographic focus to include portions of southern California, Pacific Ocean coastal lands, and offshore islands.

Over the past few months, members of our regional staff have worked closely with potential partners to organize the California LCC. We have reached out to other Interior bureaus, USDA-Forest Service, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Game, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, the Central Valley Joint Venture, and many others to inform them of our efforts, request their input, and gain their support. We have drawn even

closer to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and are exploring options to co-locate California LCC and USGS staff at Sacramento State University.

On December 7, our region hosted a presentation on climate change and wildlife adaptation by Dr. Jean Brennan, senior climate change scientist with the Defenders of Wildlife. A leader in the field of climate change and wildlife, Dr. Brennan was a recipient of the 2007 Nobel Prize for her work on climate change and has served as a member of the U.S. Delegation at international negotiations under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Many FWS, USGS, Bureau of Reclamation, and Forest Service employees attended.

I am proud of the tremendous beginning we have made. With all of us incorporating climate change into our work I am confident we can make real progress.



California wetlands provide essential habitat for populations of Northern Pintail and other migratory birds. USFWS.

Region 8 ARRA Project Updates

MODOC NWR: High School Muscle Perks Up Modoc Refuge

By Sean Cross, Modoc NWR

This summer, Modoc National Wildlife Refuge in Alturas, Calif., benefitted from the work of 11 hard working teenage workers from Alturas, and one from Littleton, Colo., part of the refuge's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer jobs program. The YCC corps was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The additional funding allowed the refuge to hire twice as many youths as it normally does for its YCC Corps, and resulted in the completion of several projects. The teens completed projects on multiple refuge units and also provided help to the Modoc National Forest. The two crews of six teens were led by supervisors and they teamed up with Student Conservation Association interns and the Back Country Horsemen of America to venture into the



Youth Conservation Crew members helping California Waterfowl's Jacob Byers band a greater sandhill crane. Dominic Bachman/USFWS

Warner Mountain Wilderness Area on the national forest.

The crews rebuilt refuge fences, repaired entry signs, planted native trees, conducted trash cleanup, constructed landscaping at the main gate, constructed decorative fencing and a kiosk at the south hunt lot on the refuge, removed invasive weeds, and completed a significant number of other projects. In fact, the crews far exceeded expectations and completed the summer work list long before the season was over and started on some back-logged maintenance projects as well.

Crew members also helped out with a new visitor exhibit by hand painting an incredibly impressive interpretive display. The crews gladly assisted the Modoc National Forest by clearing trails in the Warner Mountain Wilderness and culminated their summer in the Blue Lake area clearing trails, including an accessible trail in need of maintenance. They also enjoyed some water time as they cleaned trash out of Blue Lake itself and took time out for a swim.

The YCC youth learned a great deal about the natural environment through it all with presentations from the Back Country Horsemen of America, Student Conservation Association, and the Refuge by banding greater sandhill crane colts, night banding waterfowl, collecting native plant seeds, and planting aspens and cottonwoods for a riparian restoration project. Many of the teens were employed for the first time in their lives so we also introduced them to a structured safety program and organized work day.

Small ARRA Projects Benefit Red Bluff Fish and Wildlife Office

By Ken White, ARRA Contractor

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Pacific Southwest Region received funding to complete a wide variety of projects to Service buildings and other structures. The Red Bluff Fish and Wildlife Office (RBFWO), located in Northern California, is responsible for providing biological expertise and assistance to entities seeking to conserve and protect the ecosystems of north-central California. The RBFWO also administers the Tehama-Colusa Fish Facility (TCFF).

The TCFF is part of the Service's national fish hatchery system. Although no longer a fish rearing operation, the TCFF is a federal

facility where the Red Bluff Fish and Wildlife Office is located. They also operate and maintain the fish ladders of the Red Bluff Diversion Dam on the Sacramento River in California.

The Red Bluff office recently finished several much-needed maintenance projects at the facility thanks to ARRA funding. According to Tom T. Kisanuki, deputy project leader, "The funding has allowed our station to complete needed project work that otherwise would not have been undertaken for years."

The administration office of the facility was built in 1971. It is owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – housed in the west side of the building – and the Bureau of Reclamation – in the east side of the building. The soil around the station has a high clay content and drains poorly, which contributes to more moisture around the office building. And, in the time since

the station was built, the ground has settled, which has affected the way water drains during winter storms.

The French drain project was proposed and designed to address two primary objectives. First, to drain water away from the building and, second, to convey rainwater from the administration building's roof gutter system directly into the French Drain system.

The French drain system is actually two water conveyance systems built into a common drainage trench. The French drain has a traditional, perforated pipe system – which surrounds the west and south sides of the building – and drains the moisture in a down-gradient (2%) direction, away from the building. The administration building's gutter system is now directly connected to underground pipes set within

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the French drain. These pipes also convey water away from the building. As part of the overall project, low-lying areas immediately around the building were filled in with topsoil and amended with a layer of medium-sized gravel to promote effective drainage.

The project was completed on August 24, and the project was managed by R.E. Short Construction of Red Bluff.

In addition to the French drain project, there are a number of other facility projects that have been completed utilizing ARRA funds, including:

- Replacement of the air conditioning unit in the garage/shop building ;
- Installation of roof ventilators in the "YCC" warehouse/garage; and
- Installation of rollup doors in the "YCC" warehouse/garage.

And two additional projects have been funded, replacing an aging, inefficient modular trailer office space with a modern, energy-efficient building and repairing the damaged exterior stucco walls of the annex building and conference building.

The French drain project is one of many small projects that will have a large impact on FWS operations across the Region.

In addition to improving operations and facilities, the ARRA funds are also stimulating employment and economic growth in communities throughout the region.

"All the work was done locally and the materials were sourced locally," said Rod Short, owner of R.E. Short Construction.

"That means all the money stayed local. It was a good job and we enjoyed working with the Fish and Wildlife folks."

You've Gotta Have Art

**By Ren Lohofener,
Regional Director**

Refuges need artists. The well-being of national wildlife refuges depends on public support, and artists are experts in visceral communication to which the public can powerfully respond.

Leonard Bernstein, renowned composer and conductor, said, "Music can name the unnamable and communicate the unknowable." Prominent realist painter Edward Hopper reflected that, "If I could say it in words there would be no reason to paint."

What better champions of refuges than artists who trumpet the value of conservation and the necessity of keeping places natural. The arts reach people in a multitude of ways. Fifty years ago, before the Mississippi Barrier Islands became part of the National Park System, Walter Anderson, an illustrator and water colorist, rowed a small boat out to Horn Island. There, he recorded his thoughts and impressions. Today, his writings and paintings vividly portray the importance of these islands.

Ana Flores, artist-in-residence at Kettle Pond Visitor Center on Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Rhode Island, uses natural sculpture to interpret the intertwining of natural and cultural history and to connect people with nature. Visitation at the center since she started her residency has increased by 30 percent!

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge on the coast of Washington empowered students from the University of Washington Public Arts Program to design and construct artwork for the "Salmon Art Trail" to commemorate the res-

toration of a small stream and interpret its importance to the conservation of salmon.

Seeking Inspiration

Artists also need refuges. "Art takes nature as its model," said Aristotle. National wildlife refuges are dedicated to conserving natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. What better place for an artist to seek inspiration? With its stunning horizons and skies, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, in Georgia O'Keefe's New Mexico, is certainly one of the refuges most frequented by photographers and painters. The value of Bosque del Apache Refuge to artists and to the general public will never be doubted, because the art captured today from nature has the power to communicate for generations to come.

Artists and refuges enjoy a perfect symbiotic relationship. The arts in all their forms touch almost everyone. Cezanne, often referred to as "the father of modern art," wrote, "Painting from nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one's sensations." And poet Maya Angelou, observing the beauty of nature, reminds us, "Everything in the universe has rhythm. Everything dances."

Junior Duck Stamp entry from 8-year old Nicholas B., Nevada



Art by USFWS employee Miriam Morrill.

Painting by third grader Pawan S.

Kevin K., age 5

Giant Garter Snake Population Sighted in San Joaquin County

By Caroline Prose

The July 2009 discovery of giant garter snakes in California's San Joaquin County is the first confirmed population in the county in 15 years. The discovery, by Eric Hansen, a private consultant and researcher, was part of a study funded by the Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Program (HRP), a grant program conducted jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation.

The HRP grants annually fund a variety of habitat acquisition, restoration, research, and other projects such as outreach and planning. As part of its 2009 solicitation, the HRP requested proposals that would target status surveys for federally listed species, particularly those that will be the subject of 5-year reviews in 2010. One of these species is the federally threatened giant garter snake.

Subsequent to the proposal solicitation, the HRP received a proposal that involved surveying for the giant garter snake in an area that had not been surveyed since 1994. The proposal was funded and the study began in July. Various data has been gathered – numbers of snakes, size of occupied area, and reproductive status. Tissue samples are also being collected for genetic analysis. Hansen has so far trapped 11 large adult giant garter snakes in San

Joaquin County. Of the 11 snakes trapped, seven were male and four were female, including one pregnant snake. The pregnant female was trapped a second time and had already given birth, which shows that the snakes are reproducing. The population is one of 11 extant populations in the Central Valley.

The giant garter snake inhabits agricultural wetlands and other waterways such as irrigation and drainage canals, sloughs, ponds, small lakes, low gradient streams, and adjacent uplands in the Central Valley. Because of the loss of natural habitat, the snake relies heavily on rice fields in the Sacramento Valley, but also uses managed marsh areas in national wildlife refuges and state wildlife areas. Giant garter snakes are typically absent from larger rivers because of lack of suitable habitat and emergent vegetative cover, and from wetlands and streams with sand, gravel, or rock substrates. Riparian woodlands typically do not provide suitable habitat because of excessive shade, lack of basking sites, and absence of prey populations, however some riparian woodlands do provide good habitat. Continuing threats are the main causes for the decline of the giant garter snake, including habitat loss and fragmentation, flood control activities, changes in agricultural and land management practices, predation from introduced species, parasites, and water pollution.



Giant garter snake/Eric Hansen

Refuge Offers Canoe and Kayak Programs

By Amy Hopperstad
Stone Lakes NWR

As winter migrants headed back to summer breeding grounds, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge geared up to welcome a new set of summer visitors; local canoe and kayak enthusiasts. The refuge has completed its Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and is moving forward to open new opportunities to the public for environmental education, wildlife observation, interpretation and photography. This summer, the refuge launched a pilot summer canoe and kayak program which offered new opportunities for wildlife observation and guided interpretation paddles.

The Canoe & Kayak program took place on a historically dredged area of Lower Beach Lake on the northwest boundary of the refuge. This free public program ran June through August, Thursday through Sunday, and offered a unique opportunity for water enthusiasts to enjoy previously closed areas within a 10 minute drive from downtown Sacramento.

Led by two volunteer interns from Sacramento State University pursuing recreation degrees, 44 guided interpretation paddles were available to anyone interested in exploring local wildlife practically in their own backyard. Launching from the newly constructed gangway and floating dock, visitors were able to easily and safely load into their watercraft in a small inlet. To the delight of many, common encounters along the waterway included river otters, beavers, western pond turtles, great blue herons, Swainson's hawks and American white pelicans. All individuals/groups had to provide their own non-motorized boats (i.e. canoe or kayak), paddles and life vests for this first year. This year's successful pilot program has been adopted for next summer. Scheduled guided wildlife observation and interpretation paddles starting in June 2010.

Ruby Lake NWR's Youth Waterfowl Expo a Major Success

By **Marti Collins, Ruby Lake NWR**

The seventh annual Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge Youth Waterfowl Expo was held on September 19 and attracted 48 youth ranging in age from 9 to 17 and their families – making for a total of 150 people – a record attendance for this remote station.

The annual Expo introduces youngsters to the National Wildlife Refuge System, waterfowl, and waterfowl hunting, and is conducted by refuge staff, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Safari Club International, Ducks Unlimited, and Elko County 4-H Shooting Sports.

The refuge hosts the largest population of nesting canvasback ducks west of the Mississippi River outside of Alaska. It is visited by more than 220 species of birds, yet many Elko County residents are unaware of the wildlife observation and recreational opportunities the refuge provides.

The morning of the Expo started with the participants heading to Brown Dike for duck banding, a clinic on duck

decoys, and a workshop on firearm and boating safety. Each of the youth had a chance to help band a duck and then release it back into the wild. For most of them, this was the first time they had held a live, wild bird.

While one of the groups was banding, another was introduced to the art of putting out decoy spreads for the purpose of bringing ducks into a blind. They learned about the different types of decoys, decoy patterns, and blind placement. A third group was being instructed in the four basic rules of firearm safety, boating safety, and how to get in and out of a boat safely with firearms.

Following these activities, a member of Ducks Unlimited gave a retrieving and dog handling demonstration. In addition to having the dogs perform a number of retrieves, dog training tips were provided and a number of questions from the group were answered.

Everyone then headed back to the refuge headquarters compound, where

they were treated to a chili dog lunch, courtesy of Safari Club International.

After lunch, each youngster received a goody bag full of items, including a decoy, duck call, and lanyard.

The refuge wildlife biologist gave a duck calling demonstration, and each participant practiced their skills. They then took part in a duck calling contest, which provided great entertainment for the onlookers.

The older youth then headed out to shoot trap with 4-H Shooting Sports and NDOW oversight. The younger kids practiced on the 4-H Shooting Sports pellet gun range and LaserShot, an interactive computerized hunter education and shooting program.

At the end of the day, a drawing was held for prizes and two lucky youngsters won shotguns provided by Ducks Unlimited and Safari Club International.

Everyone had a great time, and we received many positive comments!



The smiles say it all, for these participants in the 2009 Youth Waterfowl Expo at Ruby Lake NWR/Rena Hanks, SCI

Sacramento Deputy Refuge Manager Greg Mensik Earns Department of the Interior's Meritorious Service Award

Ask Greg Mensik about his 32-year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and odds are every anecdote, memory or belief in his response includes a passionate reference to waterfowl and National Wildlife Refuges.

Over the years, his passion for waterfowl and dedication to refuges' role in conserving and enhancing their habitats has grown into a wealth of accomplishments that did not go un-noticed. On September 15, Mensik, deputy manager of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, was awarded the Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award.

A native of Pacific Grove, Calif., Mensik began his Service career in 1977 as a temporary wildlife biologist at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, but his passions for wildlife began much earlier.

"I knew I wanted to go to Humboldt State University and major in wildlife when I was in the seventh grade," he said. "And I made the right decision. After 32 years, I love my work just as much today as I did on my very first day. I have no regrets."

In 1983, Mensik came to Colusa National Wildlife Refuge, part of the Sacramento Refuge Complex. He's been a fixture at the Complex since, working as a refuge biologist, then supervisory biologist, and later as deputy refuge manager.

During an award ceremony at Sacramento Refuge headquarters, Mensik was recognized for his active leadership in community groups, irrigation boards, rice and wetland habitat committees, and Fish and Game Advisory Committees. His participation and leadership resulted in improved community relationships and development of strong ties with



Greg Mensik/USFWS

landowners, duck club managers, farmers, educators, professional scientists, and government agencies. He has worked with the agricultural community, a variety of conservation organizations, and other agencies on many complex issues including water management, wildlife depredation, and habitat management innovations.

His accomplishments include a primary role in the development and implementation of the habitat management planning system to inventory, monitor, and manage refuge habitats that has effectively guided the efforts at the Sacramento Refuge Complex for more than 25 years and was cited in June 2008 by Management Systems International as an example of an "exemplary inventory and monitoring system."

"I've been his supervisor the last 12 years and I am still learning from him every day," said Kevin Foerster, project leader at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "Besides being an outstanding biologist and manager, he is an incredible communicator. Thousands of students and refuge visitors have benefitted from his impromptu wildlife seminars."

Despite the accolades that come with a career-based Meritorious Service Award, Mensik still prefers the unspoken rewards of his daily work on one of the premier waterfowl refuges in National Wildlife Refuge System. He is driven by seeing high quality habitat being put on the ground year after year, both on and off the Refuge Complex, for the millions of birds that will use California's Central Valley.

Mensik also enjoys sharing "the show" with as many visitors as possible, and has made great efforts to get as many people out as possible to see and experience it.

"I still have a strong appreciation for what we're doing for waterfowl and wildlife here on the refuge. This is my 27th year of flooding seasonal wetlands on the refuge and the birds are coming in. To see 100 white fronted geese turn into 100,000 every year is incredible. It still gives me goose bumps," he said.

This year's fall migration will likely be the last for Mensik as the deputy refuge manager. He is planning to retire from federal service in the spring.

"But I'll still have access, still be driving the refuge auto tour route," Mensik said.

"We have great people here on the refuge, and hopefully they'll let me volunteer and keep doing the fun stuff."

Regional Employees Help With Canadian Waterfowl Banding Program at Last Mountain Lake NWA



Julie Wolford displays a male Northern pintail which was banded at the LMLNWA in August/USFWS

By Zac Jackson and Julie Wolford, Stockton FWO

The Service, in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, conducted waterfowl trapping and banding operations in Canada this summer, the sixth consecutive year. The Service assisted at nine banding stations located in three provinces: Willow Lake, Mills Lac, Stag River and Wood Buffalo in Northwest Territories (NWT); Utikima Lake, Brooks and Medicine Hat in Alberta (AB); and Cochin, and Last Mountain Lake in Saskatchewan (SK).

Traditionally, two Service employee volunteers from each region help with the trapping and banding efforts. This year, the Region 8 Fish Biologist Zac Jackson and Biological Science Technician Julie Wolford of the Stockton Fish and Wildlife Office were selected to participate.

Jackson and Wolford joined other Service biologists from Nevada, South Dakota, Maryland, and Colorado to trap and band waterfowl at Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area (LMLNWA) in Saskatchewan, Canada.

The banding and trapping station consisted of 24 swim-in-traps baited with barley and checked daily. From

August 2-27, 5,291 ducks were banded during 532 trap nights (9.9 ducks/trap night), including 2,945 mallards, 1,486 blue-winged teal, 694 redheads and 132 northern pintails. An additional 200 mallards and 200 blue-winged teal were processed and banded for the Canadian Wildlife Service as part of Avian Influenza monitoring, bringing the total to 5,691 ducks captured (10.6 ducks/trap night). The component of immature ducks banded in 2009 (15.1%) was similar to 2008 (12.6%).

The LMLNWA was established in 1887 to protect migratory birds. Its 15,600 hectares (60.2 square miles) consists primarily of native and altered grasslands, wetlands, and agricultural fields. The LMLNWA is adjacent to the north end of Last Mountain Lake which serves the region as both an important watershed and recreational fishery.

The National Wildlife Area is an important breeding ground for more than 100 different species of birds, some of which are unique to the prairie region. It was the first federal bird sanctuary reserved in North



A male mallard with a new federal band on its left tarsus/USFWS

America. More recently, LMLNWA was recognized as a “Wetland of International Importance” along with 30 other sites in Canada and over 700 locations worldwide. The National Wildlife Area consists of good waterfowl habitats and is strategically located in the heart of the central flyway of North America. Last Mountain Lake is an important resting and feeding stopover for hundreds of thousands of birds travelling across the Great Plains between their northern breeding grounds and their southern wintering grounds.

The Service’s commitment to these activities is the result of international treaties and agreements with the resource agencies of Canada and Mexico and the Flyway Councils. The survey and banding program is a long-term operational monitoring effort and is critical for assessing the status of migratory birds.



Ducks are captured in a swim in trap before being processed and banded by the crew at the LMNWA/USFWS

Service Partners for Success in Channel Island Conservation

By **Kate Eschelbach, Ventura FWO**
Over the past year, the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office (VFWO) Connecting People with Nature Program has been forging partnerships with the local environmental education and outreach community. One of our great successes has been with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary's MERITO Academy Program.

MERITO – Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans – means 'merit' in Spanish, and is the multicultural education program for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program. The program aims to increase understanding of ocean-related threats, to build sanctuary stewardship, and motivate culturally diverse students to pursue careers in marine sciences. The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) MERITO Program focuses on providing educational products, training and programs that reach the students, teachers, adults, and families living in the Santa Barbara Channel region, especially targeting local multi-cultural or underserved populations.

The CINMS MERITO Program partners with the Channel Islands Marine Resource Institute to immerse 4th to 7th grade underserved students in earth and ocean science education through MERITO. The MERITO Program's core is a seven-module, 47-lesson program that has resulted in an active contribution to ocean protection by youth. The MERITO Program has been piloted successfully in four counties served by Channel Islands and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries.

The CINMS MERITO Academy has served 60 educators (primarily teachers) and 1,700 students (between 2006-2009 in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties).

One ongoing field opportunity is a day-long field trip hosted by Island Packers, a boat concessionaire and provider of Channel Islands and Santa Barbara Channel-based educational programs centered out of Ventura and Channel Islands Harbors, in Ventura and Oxnard, Calif. The students visit

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park for marine mammal observation and an interpretive hike with Island Packers.

The program provides a total of 10 field activities during three field trips for the students that emphasize the connections between the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and the surrounding watershed.

In 2008, Kate Eschelbach, Education and Outreach Specialist for the VFWO, along with Mallory Eidson, a former VFWO SCEP student, attended both a teacher training workshop for the MERITO Academy teachers and a field trip to the Channel Islands to observe the educational activities and further examine the possibilities for partnership with the MERITO program.

What they discovered was that the opportunity to work with MERITO to reach members of the community and connect them with nature is a natural partnership in conservation education! Since that time, the MERITO Program and the VFWO have worked together to determine overlapping interests and needs and it has resulted in two avenues for partnership.

The first opportunity for partnership is through an identified need of the MERITO Program curriculum and an identified theme of the VFWO Connecting People with Nature Program, which is to incorporate climate change education into local environmental education efforts. The MERITO Program curriculum currently has lesson plans that are aligned to the State Standards. Yet, feedback from the MERITO Academy teachers has identified a need and desire for the MERITO Program to include additional lessons on climate change. Working together to apply for Connecting People with Nature funding through the Pacific Southwest Region this spring, the VFWO and MERITO Program acquired funding to hire curriculum developer Maria Petuli, the Director of "Teach at the Beach" Educational Services, to work with staff from VFWO and the MERITO Program to incorporate four lesson plans and a field component related to climate change.

The lessons will focus on ocean acidification and climate change effects

on terrestrial plants and listed bird species in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The curriculum developer will pilot the lesson plans with staff from VFWO and MERITO Academy during the 2009-2010 school year (using MERITO funds as a match). Additionally, the curriculum developer (using MERITO funds as a match) and VFWO staff will train the educators who participate in the MERITO Academy program during the annual MERITO Academy Educators Workshops this winter.

Secondly, through development of climate change lessons within the MERITO Program curriculum, which will include instruction on phenology and its use as a tool to monitor and assess climate change, there will be opportunities for school-based monitoring activities of native plants that can be submitted to the national citizen-science database on phenology, Project BudBurst. Schools that wish to further develop these activities will have the opportunity to apply for Schoolyard Habitat Program funding, which would allow for in depth investigation and participation in this effort within their schoolyard, compliment the 10 field activities of the MERITO Program by tying in the school grounds as an important location within the watershed, and provide opportunities for students to engage in an outdoor project at their school that will provide habitat not only for native plants, pollinators and other local species, but a place for students to explore and connect with nature long into the future as well.

Opportunities abound with this partnership and will continue to blossom into the future, with many thanks to the R8 Connecting People with Nature Team, the R8 Schoolyard Habitat Program and the Pacific Southwest Region for the funding opportunities to enable the start of a wonderful partnership.



Channel Islands/US Parks Service

Center Assists With Amphibian Disease Surveys

By Kimberly True, California/Nevada Fish Health Center

Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis is a parasitic fungus, causing the disease Chytridiomycosis in amphibians. This disease is responsible for population declines in many parts of the world, and extinctions of several amphibian species. Commonly referred to as Chytrid, the fungus was thought to be free-living saprophytes primarily infecting vertebrates and vascular plants, but in 1999 the fungus was found to be infectious in amphibians, and the cause of mortality observed in amphibian populations in Arizona.

In order to address this emerging amphibian disease, the California-Nevada Fish Health Center (CA-NV FHC) adapted standard techniques used in fish health disease surveys such as virology, Quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (QPCR), and histology in order to assist researchers in assessing the presence and distribution of amphibian diseases in several regions of the U.S.

The sampling technique involves swabbing the ventral surface, taking (non-lethal) toe clips or dissecting mouthparts from tadpoles. DNA is extracted from the samples and probed for *B. dendrobatidis* using methods that are extremely sensitive and capable of detecting a single fungal zoospore. The assay not only detects the actual genetic sequence of the fungus but also reports the quantity of zoospores detected on the surface, or in keratinized tissue, of amphibians.

From 2008 to 2009, we examined 600+ samples submitted by partners from Rutgers University in New York, Arcata Fish & Wildlife Office, and USGS researchers from the Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center.

Rutgers University submitted 124

northern leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*) from sites in Long Island. They were tested and 5.5% were found to be positive for *B. dendrobatidis*; this was the first reported case in leopard frogs in New York state. This finding is helping Rutgers better understand the causes of poor survival in metamorphosing amphibians that had been observed in the Long Island area.

Working with USGS researchers from California, Oregon, Idaho and Mon-

tana, over 250 amphibians belonging to the *Ascaphus* genera, the Coastal Tailed frog (*Ascaphus truei*) and the rocky mountain tailed frog (*A. montanus*), were examined for Chytrid.

The researchers were interested in testing the hypothesis that amphibian species residing in high elevation aquatic habitats, termed headwater streams, would be susceptible to Chytridiomycosis. The samples were tested by QPCR and 15% were positive for Chytrid fungus.

As part of this study, the Arcata Fish and Wildlife Office submitted 59 coastal tailed frogs (*Ascaphus truei*) collected in California headwater streams for testing; all samples from this geographical area were negative for Chytrid fungus.

The nine Fish Health Centers across the country are uniquely poised to assist with aquatic animal disease testing, in particular amphibian disease surveys for Ranavirus and Chytrid fungus. The microbiological and molecular techniques currently in use to monitor fish health are easily adapted to testing for similar types of organisms in amphibian populations.

With additional support from the fish health centers, non-lethal amphibian disease monitoring can help us better understand the distribution and prevalence of these emerging amphibian diseases.



Leopard frog/Blake Hossack, USGS

NWR Complex Dedicates Canoe Trail in Memory of David Champine

By Matt Baun, Lower Klamath NWR

Earlier this year, David Champine, a park ranger for the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, passed away unexpectedly. To honor his memory, friends and coworkers spent much of the summer constructing a canoe trail. Staff cleared trees and built a canal through Discovery Marsh, an area adjacent to the refuge visitor center, located in Tulelake, Calif. Champine oversaw the operation of the visitor center as well as many student programs and field trips.

On October 14, refuge staff, and visitors who had developed a friendship with David over the year, participated in a special ceremony to dedicate the new "David Champine Memorial Canoe Trail." The trail is 1.5 miles and meanders through a peaceful setting amidst the trees and marsh.

Ron Cole, Project Leader for the Klamath Basin Refuge Complex, remembered Champine fondly as a dedicated friend and public servant. Cole read and presented the following plaque, which has been placed on a large stone at the head of the canoe trail:

DAVID CHAMPINE MEMORIAL
CANOE TRAIL **1968 - 2009**

"This canoe trail is dedicated to the memory of David Champine. David worked as a Park Ranger at the Klamath Basin NWR Complex from Feb. 13, 2000 to March 6, 2009. David faced physical challenges throughout his life, and he left us much too soon. His smile and laughter denied his struggles. He found friends wherever he worked and lived, but perhaps his closest companionship was with nature. We dedicate this canoe trail to a man that was a friend to all and an educator to those who visit public lands. Paddle this canoe trail much as David paddled through life- with a smile of pure optimism for what lies ahead around the next bend."

Let's Go To The Fair!

By Al Donner,

Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office

Overall attendance at the California State Fair in Sacramento has been declining over the past several years. But that pattern did not apply to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 8's "Wonders of Wildlife," exhibit this year. Tens of thousands of fair-goers continued to stop at the Service's large exhibit, that has become a bigger attraction for fair visitors every year.

New display boxes at the front entrance were a significant step forward in encouraging visitors to check out what the Service's exhibit had to offer. An arresting display of illegal wildlife skins and other confiscated artifacts, provided by the Service's Law Enforcement Burlingame (CA) office, was intriguing to all. The huge foot of a poached Asian elephant and a large crocodile skull helped to attract larger crowds of visitors.

Many visitors were startled to learn how much wildlife is illegally killed, and the devastating impact to rare species caused by poachers around the world. Most visitors were appalled at the devastation so visually displayed; many appreciated the education moment. All left with an increased understanding of the need to protect wildlife, both in the U.S. and abroad.

An always-popular kids' activities area, shaded and restful, attracted a steady stream of families young and old to stop, do a simple craft or two, and learn about imperiled species. While there, they talked with a crew of friendly Service employees and volunteers from all over California and Nevada. Visitors were drawn towards the life-like San Joaquin kit fox and kangaroo rat mounts, curious to learn more about the challenges these endangered species face in today's world.

During its 18 days, thousands of fair-goers met a friendly group of 145 Service personnel who had volunteered to work at the fair. Service staff shared the challenges they face every day in trying to protect species from extinc-

tion and nudge them toward recovery. With the cheerful Service staff to help, visitors young and old made salmon egg bracelets, got wildlife tattoos, made condor visors, bird silhouettes and kit fox masks to take home with them, while enjoying the shade and friendly atmosphere of the exhibit.

The Service's exhibit also included Discovery Island Refuge, a shaded pathway on an island that meanders through native plants and information kiosk panels for visitors to explore, with shady resting spots under the trees to take a break. Visitors were attracted to the Service's airboat, placed in the moat that surrounds the island, along with life-like artificial tule islands for the duck and geese decoys. The Service's Fire Program displayed on-the-job firefighter tools for visitors to

check out; youngsters were eager to try on gloves, helmet and an actual hose pack used during fires. Visitors learned ways wildlife deal with fire and about the Service's work in managing wildfires on refuges and surrounding areas to help clear hazardous vegetation and maintain healthy habitats for wildlife.

But overall it was the many friendly folks from the Service who helped visitors enjoy their time at the Service's "Wonders of Wildlife" exhibit.

The Pacific Southwest Region (R8) began exhibiting at the California State Fair in 2004. Each year it has increased in popularity, now attracting return visitors who cannot wait to see what is new.



Transitions

Bay-Delta FWO

The following are the current staff of the recently formed Bay-Delta Fish & Wildlife Office located at 650 Capitol Mall in downtown Sacramento:

Dan Castleberry, Field Supervisor; **Mary Grim**, Deputy Field Supervisor; **Mike Hoover**, Assistant Field Supervisor; **Roger Guinee**, Assistant Field Supervisor; **Jennifer Norris**, Assistant Field Supervisor; **Steve Martarano**, Public Affairs Specialist; **Barbara Beggs**, NEPA Biologist; **Brian Hansen**, Section 7 Biologist; **Colin Grant**, Section 10 Biologist; **Heather Webb**, Section 10 Biologist; **Lori Rinek**, Section 10 Biologist; **Victoria Poage**, Delta Native Fishes Recovery Biologist; **Craig Anderson**, Hydrologist/Biologist; **Dan Cox**, Fish & Wildlife Biologist; **Derek Hiltz**, Hydrologist; **Leigh Bartoo**, Fish & Wildlife Biologist; **Nick Hindman**, Fish Biologist; **Steve Culberson**, Natural Resource Planner.

Dan Castleberry, Mary, Roger, Jennifer, Derek, Dan Cox, Leigh, and Nick were formerly with the Pacific Southwest Regional Office. Mike, Steve Martarano, Brian, Lori and Victoria were with the Sacramento FWO and Heather with the Stockton FWO. Barbara was with the Region 6, Colorado Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Office, Colin with the Bureau of Land Management in Needles, Craig was with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Sacramento, and Steve Culberson was with the CALFED Science Program.

Carlsbad FWO

Carolyn Martus joined the Carlsbad FWO in September as the Schoolyard Habitat Program Coordinator for the Conservation Partnerships Program Division. Her duties will include developing and reviewing schoolyard habitat project proposals and providing technical assistance for project implementation and other environmental educational opportunities. She will also develop and coordinate training opportunities

for classroom teachers and other environmental education professionals to integrate habitat restoration and Connecting People with Nature initiatives into their curricula. Carolyn comes to the Carlsbad Office where she has worked as an independent biological consultant on restoration projects within the San Luis Rey and Santa Margarita watersheds and conducted survey and monitoring efforts at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton for the California least tern and western snowy plover. Additionally, Carolyn has designed and implemented a native plant garden at an elementary school in Encinitas, Calif., and worked with the California Native Plant Society to implement a school garden program to promote the use of native plants in school landscapes. She holds a master of Science degree in biology from California State University at San Marcos and a bachelor's degree in biology from Rutgers University. Carolyn's volunteer experience includes current co-chair of the San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society's annual native plant sale, past president of this Chapter's Society, and botanist with the San Diego Natural History Museum Plant Atlas Project.

Susan North joined the Carlsbad FWO in November as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist for the Listing and Recovery Division. Her duties will include developing documents such as petition findings, critical habitat designations, and five-year reviews, and providing technical assistance for litigation and recovery-related actions. Susan comes to the Carlsbad Office where she has worked on biodiversity and ecological-based research projects. Susan's work experience includes evaluating floral and faunal species richness in forest habitats in the Amazon Forest of Ecuador and assisting with a captive amphibian breeding program, conducting amphibian studies in rain forests in Australia and Ecuador, and teaching wetland and habitat conservation principles to inner-city school children in San Diego. Additionally, Susan has worked for the Carlsbad FWO earlier this year by assisting with coastal California gnatcatcher field surveys. She holds a Master of Science degree in zoology and tropical ecology from James Cook University, Queensland,

Australia, and a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from California State University, Chico. Susan's passion for biodiversity hotspots and endangered species research has led her home to California, where she hopes to make a great impact for conservation.

Carey Galst joined the Carlsbad FWO in July 2009 as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist for the Listing and Recovery Division. Her duties will include developing documents such as petition findings, critical habitat designations, and five-year reviews, and providing technical assistance for litigation and recovery-related actions. Carey comes to the Carlsbad Office where she has worked on various freshwater and marine research, as well as education projects. Carey's work experience includes examining fishing efforts in the commercial groundfishing fleet in southern California, conducting ecological rapid assessment and laboratory analysis of freshwater macroinvertebrates and fish, and enhancing science education in local schools by partnering university scientists with elementary school teachers. Additionally, Carey has recently completed research associated with a Fulbright scholarship in southeastern Brazil to document fish species-habitat relationships in coastal rocky reef communities, and as a result is now fluent in the Portuguese language. She holds a Master of Science degree in biology from San Diego State University and a Bachelor of Science degree in aquatic biology and zoology from University of California, Santa Barbara.

Coleman NFH

Marc Provencher was selected to fill the vacant Fish Biologist position in September. Marc began his working career serving in the United States Navy stationed aboard the USS Austin out of Norfolk, VA. During his 4 years in the Navy, Marc was deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Marc stood armed security watches, assisted in flight-deck operations, and performed corrective and preventive maintenance on various machinery and ship components. After finishing his tour with the Navy, he earned a degree in biology from Saint Joseph's College of Maine. While in college Marc designed and implemented a research project investigating the

effectiveness of formalin as a treatment for two different strains of brook trout infected with the parasite *Gyrodactylus salmositica* at the Dry Mills State Fish Hatchery in Gray, Maine. Since August 2008, he has been working at the US Fish & Wildlife Field Office located in Red Bluff as part of the hatchery evaluation program. During this time Marc has prepared technical reports, written a journal article, and collected various biological samples from multiple fish species on the Sacramento River. Marc is an avid fly fisherman and also enjoys fly-tying and backpacking in his spare time.

Klamath Falls FWO

After 30 years of federal service Mark Buettner retired in October. Mark has first hired by the Service in Reno where he spent 12 years working on Lahontan cutthroat trout issues. Mark then moved to the Klamath Basin to take a job with the Bureau of Reclamation where he conducted investigations on the effect of the Klamath Irrigation Project on endangered Lost River and Shortnose suckers. In this capacity he also provided oversight to science studies and monitoring surveys. In 2003, Mark returned to the Service to work on endangered species recovery, ecosystem restoration and ecological monitoring.

Nevada FWO

Farewell...

Janet Bair, Assistant Field Supervisor in the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Las Vegas, has accepted a new position of Water Policy Coordinator with the Service's Southwest Regional Office in Albuquerque. On January 19, 2010, Janet will begin serving in her new role and will assist the Regional Directorate in developing a landscape-level, cross programmatic approach to the Service's engagement in water issues throughout the four state region of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. Janet will be missed by the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, but she is wished much success in her new position.

Welcome...

After interning this spring and

volunteering this summer, **Cathy Wilson** has returned as a term employee as a Cartographer Technician at the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Las Vegas. She comes from a database background having worked at Microsoft for three years as a product support technician for the Microsoft Access database program. She is completing a GIS certificate at the College of Southern Nevada this fall.

Brian A. Novosak joined the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Las Vegas as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist on August 30, 2009. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, he has a B.S., Wildlife Conservation and Management - Southwest Missouri State University and a M.S., Zoology - Southern Illinois University. Brian has worked for the Missouri Department of Conservation, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service in southern Illinois, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. He returns to us from BLM in New Mexico. Brian has a background in NEPA as well as the regulation development and permitting process. He is a sincere partner and willing participant on all levels and a firm believer in customer service.

Erin E. Boyle, Cartographic Technician, started with the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office in Las Vegas on December 6. She has a B.S. in Geography with a minor in GIS from New Mexico State University. Erin worked throughout southern New Mexico as a GIS Specialist and Biological Technician for two BLM offices and two Forest Service offices. She comes to us from a consulting firm in Denver, Colorado where she conducted geospatial analysis for global clients such as Coors Brewing Company, Exxon Mobile, and BP. Her analytical skills have been used on everything ranging from Mexican spotted owl to criminal court cases. Erin is open, honest, and eager to apply her skills in Nevada.

Regional Office

As of Dec. 31, ARD for Water & Fisheries **John Engbring** is retiring with 32 years of federal service – all but two of them with the Service. John began his career working for the Peace Corps

in the South Pacific Islands, doing bird surveys. He transitioned to the Service and continued with forest bird surveys for the next 12 years for the ES Division of the Honolulu Office. Wanting to experience nice weather for a change, John relocated to Washington's Olympia Field Office and worked on the Northwest Forest Plan and on HCPs with the large timber companies in the Pacific Northwest. This experience led him to transition to the California Nevada Operations Office in Sacramento, as one of the original nine employees who started what has now become Region 8. His first assignment was supervisor of the Klamath Fish and Wildlife Offices where he chaired the Klamath Task Force – a job that lasted 10 years. John then became the ARD for Water & Fisheries. During this time he took on several DC details, including one with the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, and another as the Acting Chief of the Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation. "As I look back on my career I think of three major conservation efforts where I hope I was able to contribute; conducting baseline forest bird surveys in the Pacific Islands; changing timber harvesting practices in the Pacific Northwest through the negotiating of forest HCPs; and working with the tribes, government agencies, and fishing interests to move forward in restoring Klamath."

Diane Elam has been selected as the new Chief for the Section 7, Environmental Contaminants, and Habitat Conservation Division in the Regional Office. Diane has been in the Regional Office for the past nine years in various Ecological Services positions. Her most recent position has been as Deputy Division Chief of Listing, Recovery, and HCPs. Prior to her time in the Regional Office, Diane spent six years in the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office as a Recovery Coordinator and staff biologist. Diane earned a PhD from UC Riverside, a Master's from the University of Colorado, and a Bachelor's Degree from the College of Idaho. Diane started her new position on December 6.

Jeness McBride has been Region 8's HCP Coordinator since August.

Jeness came to the Service after a stint with the Peace Corps as an agroforestry volunteer in Guatemala, and she spent 2 years as a research associate in landslide rehabilitation at Macaya Biosphere Reserve, Haiti. Jeness began her 19-years of Federal service working for the Corps of Engineers as a NEPA planning biologist for 6 years in New Orleans. Jeness came to the Service by way of the Lafayette, Louisiana Field Office where she worked as a biologist before moving to the Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. In those positions she was lead biologist for HCPs, Safe Harbor Agreements, and section 7 consultations. We were fortunate to lure Jeness out of the tropics to the Regional Office where she has done a great job managing and improving the 5-Year Review Program, and working on a variety of other ESA issues in the 3 years she has been with us. Jeness' formal education includes a B.S. in Forestry, and a M.S. in Wildlife Science - both from Virginia Tech. She also completed the Ph.D.-level coursework and field research in tropical forest ecology at the University of Florida.

Javier Linares was recently hired to fill the Fish Biologist position in the Regional Office Fisheries Program. Javier comes to us from U.C. Davis, where he worked under Serge Doroshov on projects quantifying environmental stress in green and white sturgeon larvae. He also served as a consultant to commercial sturgeon aquaculture facilities in California and Idaho. Javier has received his Doctorate in Physiological Ecology and from UC Davis and also has a Bachelor's from Davis in Animal Science (Aquaculture). In addition, Javier has attended Chico State and Butte College. Javier is a member of the American Fisheries Society and the North American Chapter of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society. Javier was born and raised in Spain, and currently lives in Galt. He is a sincere partner and willing participant on all levels and a firm believer in customer service.

Carol Damberg is moving to the Refuge Operation Chief position, vice Barry Christenson.

For the past six months, the Region 8 Migratory Bird Program has been

growing and will continue to grow in the ensuing months to provide a staff that is ready to address your migratory bird permit, conservation, and management needs.

Jennifer Brown is our lead Migratory Birds Permit Specialist for the region. She joined the program in mid-September from the Sacramento Field Office where she was a wildlife biologist working on a diversity of water-related projects for the past 18 months. She is a graduate of the Federal Career Internship Program through which she worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Division and Environmental Chemistry Branch, the Service's Sacramento Valley Branch, Endangered Species Program, and EPA's Wetlands Regulatory Branch. She was also involved in the South Bay Pond Restoration Project and the mercury study at Don Edwards NWR. Jennifer received her bachelor's degree in environmental biology and management from UC Davis.

Dr. Eric Kershner joined the Service as a Migratory Bird Wildlife Biologist. He comes to the region from the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton where he supervised the Wildlife Management Branch. While at Camp Pendleton Eric was responsible for overseeing all wildlife management activities on the base including developing and implementing conservation management. Due to Eric's efforts at Camp Pendleton, there is now a much stronger coordinated effort to ensure non-listed migratory bird species conservation is included in the Base's environmental analyses. He was also responsible for instituting several new migratory bird surveys on the base. Through his work experience with the consulting firm, Technology Associates, and the nonprofit organization Institute for Wildlife Studies in San Diego, he gained experience in developing and implementing conservation plans for migratory birds at the local and regional level including coordinating monitoring and research and implementing conservation actions. Eric has a bachelor's in biology, with a minor in chemistry from Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, a master's in biological sciences from Eastern Illinois University, and a Ph. D. in natural resources and en-

vironmental sciences from University of Illinois. While obtaining his masters he studied the reproductive success of grassland birds on East-central Illinois airports. For his doctorate, he also concentrated on grassland birds where he studied the effects of habitat restoration on grassland birds and researched factors that may cause population declines. He is a master bander and has extensive field experience banding, surveying birds, and implementing telemetry studies. He has written numerous technical reports and published in several peer-reviewed journals with emphasis on passerine species research and ecology. He is located in the Carlsbad Office and is the primary point of contact for migratory bird issues from Madera County southward.

Dr. Rob Doster comes to the Region 8 Migratory Bird Program from the Bureau of Reclamation in Albuquerque, N.M. where he served as the agency's Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Coordinator for the Albuquerque Area Office. In addition to focusing on flycatcher recovery efforts at BOR, he also worked on Interior least tern and western yellow-billed cuckoo conservation issues. Rob has extensive field experience including leading migratory bird research projects, monitoring bird populations at a regional scale, and identifying habitat associations for migratory birds within a large geographic area and in various habitat types. Through his academic experiences he has worked closely with Joint Ventures and Refuges throughout the lower Mississippi Valley. Rob has published several articles in peer-reviewed journals in addition to being a peer reviewer for several journals and research programs. Rob's lifelong passion for birds has led him to earn a Bachelor of Arts in biology from Hendrix College (Conway, Ark.) and a Master of Science in zoology from the University of Arkansas where he studied the home range and foraging habitat characteristics of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Rob also earned his Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas where he studied the ecology of wintering migratory birds in early-successional habitats of the lower Mississippi River alluvial valley. Rob is the programs primary point of contact for migratory bird technical assistance

in California north of Madera County.

Nevada and Klamath Basin Biologist Efforts are underway to fill this position in the next several months.

Sacramento FWO

Peter Cross, Supervisory Biologist, retired on Oct. 2. Cross served in several roles in SFWO over his more than a decade in SFWO, most recently as Deputy Assistant Field Supervisor in the ES Program.

Dozens of Biological Opinions from the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley branch biologists went under Peter's eye every year, receiving careful review before completion. A native of Maine who worked in that state's wildlife program for many years before coming to California, Peter and his wife are contemplating a return to Maine at some point—but only when they are sure the snow has melted!

Iris Atkinson, Cooperative Agreements Assistant in the Budget Branch, retired on Dec. 12, 2009 after nearly 15 years in SFWO. Iris's calm and knowledgeable assistance helped many in the SFWO work their way through the complexities of contracting over the years. She is looking forward to spending her time with her grandchildren in Sacramento and Arizona.

Departing at the end of their contracts -- **Keith Dunning**, **Priscilla Chamblee**, **Michaele King**.

Promotion – **Karen Leyse**, biologist in SFWO for the last four years, accepted the position of Listing Branch Chief for the office. Karen has nearly 20 years in federal service, mostly in the Forest

Service, and has a doctorate in ecology from UC Davis.

Transfers – to Bay-Delta FWO: biologists **Mike Hoover**; **Victoria Poage**; **Brian Hansen**; **Lori Rinek**, and I&E Specialist **Steve Martarano**; to USGS: biologist **Jeremy Redding**; to Region 9 Coastal Program: biologist **Rick Kuyper**; to SF Bay NWR: biologist **Melisa Helton**; within SFWO to Coast Bay Branch biologist **Joseph Terry**; to the Regional Office, **Jennifer Brown**: (Migratory Birds).

New SFWO employees – biologists **Florence Gardipee** and **Ben Watson**.

San Francisco Bay NWR

Doug Cordell joined Region 8 in October as the first ever Public Affairs Officer for the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Doug comes to Fish and Wildlife by way of experience in both media and government. As a writer for educational television, he was nominated for an Emmy in 2004. He has also been a regular commentator for the national public radio program Marketplace. Prior to his work in radio and television he served as a speechwriter and press officer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2 office in New York and, subsequent to that, ran the communications operation of a community-labor alliance serving low-wage workers in New York City.

Jared Klein joined the San Francisco Bay NWRC as a Refuge Law Enforcement Officer in September, transferring from the John Heinz NWR at Tinicum, in Philadelphia, Penn. Prior to Tinicum, Jared was

stationed in the Northern Everglades, at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR in Palm Beach County, Fla. Before moving to the Fish and Wildlife Service, he worked for the National Park Service, with a number of duty assignments on both the east and west coasts of the U.S. He graduated from The Pennsylvania State University with a B.S. in recreation and park management, following a four-year tour with the U.S. Army Military Police Corps.

Stockton FWO

The Stockton Fish and Wildlife Office welcomes several new employees to its Juvenile Fish Monitoring Program. **David LaPlante** has joined the program as a Field Crew leader. David has years of fisheries field experience and comes to Stockton from the USGS Science Center in Oswego, New York. David will be responsible for leading our field crews for juvenile fish monitoring and other fisheries investigations. **Amber Aguilera**, **Dustin Dinh**, **Amy Combs**, and **Jolene Willis** have joined our team as Biological Science Technicians. Amber and Dustin were previously Scientific Aides for the California Department of Fish and Game, Amy comes to us from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission in John Day Oregon, and Jolene was most recently with the USGS in Klamath Falls, Oregon. **Patrick Hapgood** has been selected as a Small Craft Operator, and brings years of boating and safety experience from his service as a Coxswain in the U.S. Coast Guard.

The STFOW also bids farewell to **Heather Webb** and **Ken Behen**. Heather was our field crew leader for the past two years, and is now a biologist with the Bay Delta FWO.

We Are the Pacific Southwest Region is an online employee publication produced by the California and Nevada Region's External Affairs Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, Calif., 95825. Articles and photos were primarily incorporated from FWS Journal submissions. Questions regarding the newsletter can be sent to Erica Szlosek at erica_szlosek@fws.gov or by phone at (916) 978-6464.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit: www.fws.gov and www.fws.gov/cno.

Ken Behen has moved to Augusta, GA with his family and is now medical research technician with the Veterans Administration.

Ventura FWO

Heather Abbey, a long-time Californian, began working for the Service as a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) employee in July 2008 in the South Coast Division of the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office. She became a permanent, full-time biologist with the Ventura FWO in August 2009. She received her Master's degree in environmental science and management from the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara. As a SCEP employee, Heather worked on various projects, including a 5-year review for the Conejo dudleya, a plant native to the Santa Monica Mountains, and several Section 7 consultations. Heather's primary expertise is in conservation planning.

Colleen Mehlberg, a native of Southern California, began working for the Service as a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) employee in September 2008 in the South Coast Division of the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office while she was an undergraduate at California State University, Channel Islands. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental science with an emphasis in resource management in May 2009. She became a permanent, full-time biologist with the Ventura FWO in August 2009. As a SCEP employee, Colleen worked on projects in several program areas, including Section 7 consultations and various concurrence and comment letters, and was the primary author of the 5-year status review for the Hoffman's slender-flowered gilia, a plant that is restricted to Santa Rosa Island off the coast of Santa Barbara County.

Kate Eschelbach, Environmental Education Specialist for the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, was one the Region 8 nominee for the Service's 2009 Sense of Wonder Award. The Sense of Wonder Award is the Service's highest honor for achievement in environmental education and interpretation.

The award, presented annually by the Service, takes its name from a book by the great conservationist and former Service employee, Rachel Carson, who urged adults to help children develop a "sense of wonder" in the natural world that would continue to grow for generations.

Kate and a nominee from each region attended the National Association of Interpreters annual conference on November 19, 2009, in Hartford, Connecticut where the 2009 Sense of Wonder Award was presented to Jim Burkhart, Supervisory Visitor Services Specialist at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Congratulations to Kate and all the nominees!

Yreka FWO

Karen West, a wildlife biologist, joined the Yreka FWO in November. Before moving into her new position, Karen spent 20 years with the Klamath National Forest. Karen will join Yreka FWO's forest resources branch and will be working on northern spotted owl issues.

Deputy Project Leader **Roxanna Hinzman** left Yreka to go to Region 4. She is the Chief for the Division of Planning and Permitting in the Southeast Region. Her division has biologists who oversee Section 10a1a, Project Planning, Environmental Contaminants, NRDAR, NHPA, and soon, they are adding a hydrologist to the team.

Phil Detrich, Field Supervisor for the Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office, announced his retirement earlier this month. He will retire at the end of February. Phil's career arch goes something like this: wildlife biologist-turned-government manager-turned government negotiator of complex environmental issues. Asked to describe a few career highlights, Detrich points first to the work and experiences he shared with colleagues. "The most rewarding part is that I worked with teams of fantastic, intelligent people. Together, we can point to places on a map where our work made a difference; we can point to places that have been saved for future generations." Detrich has been at the forefront of numerous controversies over the years that resulted, ultimately, in significant conservation success stories. In the late 1980s

and early 1990s, the northern spotted owl was proposed for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). For several years, demonstrations by environmentalists and industry supporters were the norm on California's North Coast, with occasional violent incidents. Detrich, who represented the Service in various capacities, including providing Congressional testimony, found himself in the thick of it from the start. The atmosphere at the time often necessitated the need to take extreme safety measures as Detrich traveled to various public meetings.

"We had escape vehicles at backdoors, metal detectors at front doors; it was a very contentious time," said Detrich. Despite the turmoil around the ESA-listing of the owls and the marbled murrelet, Detrich successfully coordinated the nation's first forestry HCP with Simpson Timber Company and later represented the Service in the landmark, 5 ½ year-long negotiation that resulted in the Pacific Lumber HCP and Headwaters Forest acquisition.

Phil has spent much of the last decade working on salmon and other fish-related issues in the Klamath Basin. The Klamath River is the West Coast's third most productive salmon fishery and has also been the site of one of the West's biggest "water wars." Phil has been serving as one of the Service's lead Klamath negotiators for the past few years. As improbable as it sounds, former sparring partners have become allies and a long-term solution to these water related conflicts may be imminent. Phil and other members of the federal negotiating team have been at the table for the last few years representing the Service's interests and helping other parties at the table understand complex regulatory issues. These agreements may be signed soon – and if so would be a fitting bookend to an active and productive career in conservation. Asked to share a constructive lesson or two from his experiences with negotiating complex environmental matters, Phil responds, characteristically, in the form of a maxim:

"You can't do much for wildlife, if you can't work with people."