

FALL 2014

THE WILDSIDE

A newsletter for the supporters of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

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and more!***

ABOUT DRIWR & IWRA



The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) is located along the lower Detroit River and western shoreline of Lake Erie. Established in 2001 as the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America, it includes islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands along 48 miles of shoreline. Its unique location in a large urban area allows significant opportunities for the public to experience fish, wildlife and plants in their natural habitat. The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization - a "Friends" organization that works to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the development of the DRIWR. We invite you to become a supporter of IWRA.

Visit iwralliance.org, www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river and www.drhawkwatch.org for more periodic updates.

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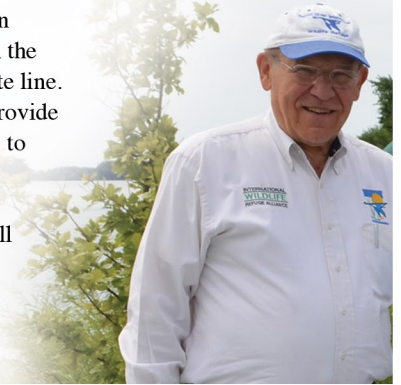
Photo credits USFWS

A Message from the Alliance Chair

We are indeed fortunate to witness the creation of an International Wildlife Refuge, an urban refuge from the lower Detroit River south to the Michigan-Ohio state line. The Detroit River and western basin of Lake Erie provide the catalyst for this transformation, but it is up to us to make it work with dedicated volunteers and staff.

Special thanks to U.S. Congressman John D. Dingell and U.S. Senator Carl Levin for their vision and persistence in helping to make this possible.

Richard Micka, Chair
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board



A Note from Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager



Well, it is that time of year once again where some of us spend long days in the field, refuge habitats are being managed, and we are catching up on long overdue maintenance with those dreaded mosquitoes out in force. Yes, it is summertime at the refuge! One of the great things about summertime in the refuge is that it always seems to bring with it some well-deserved assistance in the form of interns and the ever popular Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) program.

This year is no exception. This year the refuge welcomed five local young people and an adult leader to be a part of the 2014 YCC crew. Through the program, youth gain valuable, sometimes life changing experiences in a working environment while helping the refuge complete projects that would otherwise not get accomplished. The YCC program is challenging, educational and fun, offering individuals the chance to play an active role in protecting the nation's precious resources. This year was particularly exciting because the Refuge received federal funding to also recruit and employ youth from the Steve Harvey Foundation Mentoring program, targeted at teaching leadership skills and providing mentoring to young men.

The youth employees and adult leader completed an array of tasks including but not limited to: general refuge operations, wildlife research, trail maintenance, environmental education and recreation programs, and basic grounds upkeep and repair. An exciting twist this year gave the crew four weeks to spend with our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Program. The crew learned mark-and-recapture methods for tagging Lake Sturgeon, a once plentiful prehistoric fish that can measure up to 7 feet in length and weighing up to 200 pounds. Through these experiences, crew members learned about career opportunities in the conservation field, gain valuable work experience and skills, and develop lifelong friendships with other young adults.

The 2014 team included two youth leaders (Devin Lang of Gibraltar, MI and Alexis Gundick of Trenton, MI) and three other crew members (Stacy Alvarez of Lincoln Park, MI, Malik Jones of Warren, MI, and Roblyn Franklin of Gibraltar, MI). Leadership for this YCC team was provided by adult leader Mr. Norman Clement, experienced in working with youth as an elementary school teacher and as a Program Coordinator for the Detroit Youth Foundation.



From the Refuge Manager

John H. Hartig



2014 Kids Fishing Fest a Major Success!

There are many ways in which we try to provide children with a compelling outdoor recreational experience and inspire them to become part of the next generation of conservationists. One of our annual traditions is the Kids Fishing Fest on the Detroit River Walk at Milliken State Park in downtown Detroit.

This year it was held on Sunday, June 8th. Over 275 children went fishing, many for the first time. In total, over 450 adults and children participated. The event was sponsored by the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Rivertown Detroit Association, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and many others. Working the event this year was US Fisheries staff from the Waterford Substation, Refuge staff, and IWRA Board Member, Gary Kirsh. "It was so exciting to see an idea come to reality," noted Chip Rohde, President of Rivertown Detroit Association. "It is truly priceless to see so many kids coming to the riverfront to learn and have fun."

Kids Fishing Fest featured fishing instruction, environmental education, free food, fishing prizes, games, and more to help create lasting memories along our beautiful Detroit riverfront. For each of you involved in the Refuge, thank you for helping make this possible and for helping us develop the next generation of conservationists in urban areas where 80% of the people in the United States now live.

John Hartig, Refuge Manager

YCC Discover the Bowfin!

The week of June 30th, the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) along with biologists from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fisheries Division, deployed fyke nets in Humbug Marsh as part of a fish community assessment. The biologists and students are performing a pre-assessment of the marsh before the fishing pier is to be constructed in 2015. Once the pier is in place, the biologists will conduct a post-assessment to see if the newly added structure has an impact on the fish community. This was also a great week to have the students from the YCC involved and learning about traditional fisheries sampling gear and other techniques. The students are learning fish identification and different morphological characteristics along with many other interesting facts about the fish species in the Great Lakes and their importance to the marsh community.

A new fish species, most of the students had never seen before, was the Bowfin caught within Humbug Marsh. This is one of the apex predators that roam the shallows throughout the weeds waiting for its prey. During spawning season, the bowfin becomes incredibly aggressive. The males' fins turn a brilliant green to attract the females, as the students experienced firsthand this past week. Another adaptation is the distinctive eye spot at the base of the caudal fin that is visible year round. This spot provides some protection from other predators such as northern pike or snapping turtles. The eye spot deflects predators' attacks away from the head of the fish, where more damage would be inflicted, and focuses the predators' attack on the tail where the bowfin will have a better chance of survival. Overall, it was a very interesting find for not only the biologists but for the students as well.



Photo credit USFWS with Eric Stadig, Fisheries Biologist



SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2014

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) recently welcomed 300 guests to the Silver Shores Waterfront of Wyandotte for the 9th Annual Benefit Dinner in support of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR), Sunday, May 18. Dinner, raffles and auctions were enjoyed along the waterfront of the Detroit River. The presentation of the “John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Award” were given in recognition of leadership and dedication to conservation on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie basin.

The 2014 honorees:

Ms. Paula Boase
(Individual Award)

Paula was honored for her professional grant administration support for the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge that contributes to the quality of life in the Down River Community. Ms. Boase has promoted "placemaking" and brownfield cleanup of the Refuge Gateway, the site for the future Visitor Center now under construction.

Her relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as other civic entities, has contributed to the overall success of the Refuge.

Essex Region Conservation Authority
(Not-for-Profit Organization Award)

A key organization of Ontario, Canada, under the leadership of Richard Wyma, ERCA Director, the “Western Lake Erie Watershed Priority Natural Area” was adopted by Canadian partners on September 27, 2012. This enlarged the scope of the Detroit River INTERNATIONAL Wildlife Refuge exponentially. The Essex Region Conservation Authority is also recognized for being the lead organization in constructing the Fighting Island Sturgeon Reef. Accepting the award was Danielle Stubing and Sue Desjarlais.

Hamilton-Anderson
(Corporate Award)

When it comes to design, Hamilton-Anderson Associates excel as is seen by their work on the Refuge Gateway master plan. Hamilton-Anderson Associates also played a critical role in the Byways to Flyways Bird Driving Tour map and the Detroit Heritage River Water Trail map. Kent Anderson and Burke Jenkins accepted the award from Refuge Manager, John Hartig. It is with the help of these partners, along with so many others, that we celebrate accomplishments in the progress of the Refuge. Thank you everyone for your time and support to help further the mission of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The award was accepted from Dick Micka, IWRA and John Hartig

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization (#20-3318708) dedicated to helping the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service deliver the mission of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, North America's first international wildlife refuge – working through partnerships to protect, conserve, and manage the Refuge's wildlife and habitats; and to create exceptional conservation, recreational, and educational experiences, to develop the next generation of conservation stewards, thanks to you!



Congratulations Jo-Anne, we anxiously await to hear of your adventure!

AND THE WINNER IS...

Jo-Anne Gronlund of Grosse Ile, Michigan was the lucky winner of the Once-in-a-Lifetime Cruise aboard a Great Lakes Freighter Adventure raffle. Gronlund's winning ticket was one of nearly 1,000 tickets sold by the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance to support the mission of Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. We thank you all who entered into the raffle. The unique opportunity to travel the Great Lakes aboard a working freighter was generously donated by the Interlake Steamship Company for a summer 2015 cruise.



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WE ALSO THANK THE MANY INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS OF THE 9TH ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER

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Congratulations Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge on your 20 years of service with the U.S. fish and Wildlife Service!

Meet Michael Pucak

Summer 2014 Refuge Intern

An Eagle Scout, born and raised east of Cleveland, Ohio, Michael comes to us with many skills and talents to assist with any assignment given. Recent graduate in Parks and Resource Management from Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania, Michael has been a valuable addition to the Refuge team this summer.

Over the past six summers he has worked in the field of a variety of park systems as a Natural Resource Specialist at Headlands Beach State Park, Mentor, Ohio and Kelleys's Island, and a seasonal park Law Enforcement officer at Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware.

“A favorite experience this summer has been with resource management efforts on the Refuge, pesticide application and the removal of the invasive species, garlic mustard”, says Michael. “I have really enjoyed hanging out here with the Fish and Wildlife Service”.



Refuge Stewardship Update

Greg Norwood

Refuge Wildlife Biologist

Here at Detroit River IWR, we protect a variety of fish and wildlife habitats of the lower Detroit River and along western Lake Erie and often actively rehabilitate them through emulation of natural disturbances such as wind, fire, and flooding. Here are some examples in the last year that our organization is carrying out through volunteers, partner organizations, staff, and contractors.

WIND

Emulation of a relatively large wind-throw event at the Humbug Marsh Unit to create variable-sized light gaps. In combination with a reduction in the deer herd, a proposed prescribed fire, and aggressive treatment of non-native, invasive species, native plant and animal communities will benefit.

FIRE

We are waiting for appropriate conditions for a third prescribed fire on the refuge which will carry through young forest and wet prairies either at the Strong or Humbug Marsh Unit. Within prescription, we are emphasizing fire at varying degrees of intensity, frequency, and time of year, just as nature would do it.

FLOODING

A number of exciting projects are occurring to add quality habitat to the Refuge. We are working with Ducks Unlimited to install a pump and AgriDrain® structure at the 260-acre Ford Marsh Unit to allow staff to manipulate water levels and restore important ecological processes. There were 42 acres of former soybean fields seeded with native prairie plants at the Brancheau and Strong Units this winter and are being mowed regularly to ensure successful establishment during these crucial first few growing seasons. Local genotype prairie cordgrass plugs, through a partnership with the Saginaw Correctional Facility, have been planted in these fields. A small prairie at the Gibraltar Bay Unit will also start its rehab this year.

An additional 85 acres of soybean fields at the Brancheau and Fix Units will have water control to restore wet prairie/ young forest habitat and parts of it will be seeded with wet prairie seed in late fall.

Finally, Refuge staff have reduced narrow-leaved cattail at the large Brancheau unit in an effort to diversify this hemi-marsh over time. The small unit is scheduled to be mowed and disced this summer and it will then be followed by a slow flooding next spring to maximize important food for shorebirds and waterfowl.

These overarching stewardship objectives are being done within our Phragmites control program. You can learn more about this here: <http://driwr.emich.edu/>



Meet Katie Dennis Landscape Designer



Katie is a Michigan native passionate about using Michigan natives (plants, that is!) in designs on the landscape. Her background is in environmental studies and landscape architecture, and she is excited about her opportunity create spaces that serve the public as well as provide habitat to the wildlife that is central to the mission of the Refuge System. Katie loves nature and cities, and the intersections between them! She feels lucky to have found a home at the DRIWR.

A Look Ahead

SEPTEMBER 20, 21

9 am – 5 pm Saturday, Sunday

66th Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival

Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Brownstown, MI. Enjoy a Michigan tradition of games, raffles, food, and prizes – Goose & Duck Calling, “Jump Dogs”, Midwest Decoy Contest, Wildlife Art & Craft show are just a few features of the two day event. www.miwaterfowlfest.org

Annual Hawkfest Weekend

Lake Erie Metropark

A two-day celebration of the annual fall migration of birds of prey – hawks, eagles, falcons, and vultures. Each September, tens of thousands of broad-winged hawks pass over this area designated as one of the premier hawk watching sites in North America. Typically, 200,000 birds of prey migrate over Lake Erie Metropark from September through November on their southward journey. The event will be held at the Marshlands Museum and Nature Center of Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown Township. (A Metroparks vehicle entry permit is required to enter Lake Erie Metropark \$5). www.metroparks.com

OCTOBER 3, Friday

TBA Spiders!

Humbug Marsh Unit with Humbug Marsha and friends showing the amazing side of a spiders life! Watch for further announcements.

NOVEMBER 8, Saturday

TBA Owl Prowl Night Hike

Humbug Marsh Unit with Humbug Marsha Watch for future announcements.

DECEMBER 21, Sunday

Happy 13th Birthday DRIWR !

Check the IWRA website often for any date or event changes . . . www.iwralliance.org

Exciting Projects Continue to Transform the Refuge Gateway!

A quick glance at the Refuge Gateway and it is clear – big changes are happening! Not only is our Visitor Center well underway, there are major landscape projects under construction, as well. These new elements will strengthen public access and enhance overall usability of the site to set the stage for the Visitor Center, slated to open in late 2015. We appreciate everyone’s patience, in the meantime, as access to the site will be extremely limited until the Visitor Center is completed.



Raptor Point Deck

Tremendous thanks go out to Richard Mills, a perennial friend of the refuge, for his hard work this spring building our new observation deck at Raptor Point. Located at the southeast corner of the Refuge Gateway, Raptor Point is a top spot for watching birds of prey and provides an excellent view of Humbug Island. The deck is constructed with recycled plastic lumber, which reduces maintenance needs, showcases our commitment to using sustainable materials, and looks great!



Monguagon Boardwalks

Also under construction is a pair of boardwalks across the Monguagon Wetlands. Eventually, these boardwalks will connect to Downriver’s 50+ miles of linked greenway, tying the Refuge Gateway to Lake Erie Metropark, Elizabeth Park, and other regional green spaces. The boardwalks will provide an accessible walkway between the two ponds and feature an interpretive overlook highlighting the Monguagon Drain Daylighting project. We’re so lucky to have a great crew from three local Lowe’s stores helping us with the construction! Like Raptor Point’s deck, these boardwalks will be constructed from recycled plastic lumber – we can’t wait until they are packed with visitors!



WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2014

More than 2200 middle and high school students from Wayne County attended the 5th annual celebration of World Wetlands Day last Friday, January 31, 2014 at Oscar A. Carlson High School in Gibraltar, Michigan. The event featured a Wetlands Exposition showcasing 25 conservation organizations, displays and interactive games like Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge’s “Whopper Jawed!,” the Ultimate Wetlands Trivia Game, designed for student participation. Program attendees were also treated to interpretive programs and presentations led by area conservation leaders. We’re looking forward to another successful year in 2015, and preparation has already begun. If you would like to participate in the 2015 World Wetland’s Day event please contact Crystal Fowler at fowlerc@gibdist.net.

Did You Know?

What is no larger than a dime, has eight simple eyes that can see things up to four feet away, has eight legs covered with hairs that each have individual sensory receptors, and can leap 10-40 times its own body length?

Any member of the largest group of spiders found worldwide—**Jumping Spiders!**

Those long, thin, hairy legs stretching to over three inches and the ability to run across water to catch insects, even small fish, make Fishing Spiders appear menacing, but in reality they're quite shy.

Did you know Goldenrod Crab Spiders can change their color to blend in with their hunting ground, usually the tops of flowerheads.

Orb-weaving spiders can detect what types of prey species are caught in their webs based on the vibrations of the web strands. Amazing!

Spiderman's cool super powers are based on these amazing creatures and their incredible senses! To learn more about real "Spidey Senses," join us on **Friday, October 3** when we'll watch these Super Predators at work.

- Dorothy McLeer, UMD Naturalist



Photo: M.J. Raupp



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