

Spring 2018

# THE WILDSIDE

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



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PHOTO CREDIT: MARK MESSER PHOTO: GREEN HERON



# A Message from the Alliance Chair

17 Years! From concept to reality. From 400 acres to 18,100 acres. An International Wildlife Refuge. That's Dr. John H. Hartig! What a story. Now, a Fulbright Scholarship dedicated to the restoration efforts of the Great Lakes. What more could one ask? Think about it! We will miss him at the Refuge, but he will always be with us. Thank you, John!

**Richard G. Micka, Chair**  
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board



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](http://iwralliance.org), [www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit\\_river](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river) and [www.drhawkwatch.org](http://www.drhawkwatch.org) for more periodic updates.

**IWRA Email:** [iwr\\_alliance@yahoo.com](mailto:iwr_alliance@yahoo.com)  
**IWRA Office:** 734.692.7671

**DRIWR Office:** 734-362-7736

**General Information:** 734-265-0219

#### U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Staff

- Steve Dushane • Acting Refuge Manager
- Jody DeMeyere • Visitor Services Manager
- Jennifer Braatz • Visitor Services Park Ranger
- John Nicely • Maintenance Mechanic
- Anna Cook • Administrative Assistant
- Jake Bonello (Pathways) • Biological Support
- Tyler Dolin • Biological Technician

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## A Memory from the Chairman: IWRA loses first chairman and a friend

My introduction to George Mans was grounded in the inception of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in 2004. The Principals, Honorable John D. Dingell (Ranking Member of Congress) and Dr. John H. Hartig (newly appointed Refuge Manager) were closely aligned with George who had served in the Michigan Legislature and held an office in the City of Flat Rock. There were a number of us that assembled in Woodhaven under the direction of Anita Twardesky, Mary Bohling, Molly Lurmpert-Coy (DTE) and others to formulate By - Laws and Non-Profit (501 c 3) status in support of the new Refuge. Big Job! All of this transpired over a period of time 2004/2005.



George was our sounding board for all manner of organizational issues and was elected to act as Chairman for the fledgling assembly. His advice and council were critical to the formulation of the institution! He acted as an intermediary between the officials who were engaged in legislative affairs and acquisition priorities which exist even until the present day. George became the inaugural Chairman of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance. You could see the Organization assimilate under his skillful guidance. What a guy! There was a diverse Board of Directors from all walks of life and George made each of us feel like we were contributing to the Cause.

He was awarded the coveted John D. Dingell Friends of the Refuge Award in 2010. All of us who are closely affiliated with the mission and responsibilities of the Alliance would do well to emulate the legacy of George Mans and the conservation ethic he espoused. George really treasured his family and his community. He will be missed.

Richard G. Micka, Chair, IWRA

## Meet Our Newest Naturalist!



**Miss Clara Jane LaFleur**

Born December 4, 2017 to the proud parents of Brian and Nicole LaFleur (Engagement Assistant), weighing in at an adorable 7 lbs 2 oz of cuteness! You're sure to be seeing the LaFleur family around the Refuge and in the community soon.



# From the Refuge Manager

## John Hartig

It has truly been an honor to work for the Service and with all of you for the last 17 years in building North America's only international wildlife refuge. I feel blessed and honored to have convened the Conservation Vision workshop in 2000, given testimony on the Hill in support of establishing the refuge, become the first Refuge Manager, fostered partnerships for conservation, and been part of a team that has seen the refuge grow from 300 acres to over 18,700 acres today, and doing it in a fashion that is bringing conservation to cities in innovative ways to inspire the next generation of conservationists. I can't tell you how special this has been.

From the bottom of my heart thank you for this honor of working with you and for your support and friendship.

And now, amazingly, I have been appointed as a Fulbright Scholar in Canada to work between Canada and the U.S. on restoration of the Great Lakes. I am serving as the Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Global Governance at Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The focus of my Fulbright will be "What have we achieved and learned from 32 years of the remedial action plan program to cleanup Great Lakes Areas of Concern." My Fulbright appointment will last till the end of May and then I will come home and work an additional two years with the International Association for Great Lakes Research and the Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management Society to finish this work that will help sustain and grow support and funding to finish the job of cleaning up these pollution hot spots.

I promise that you will see me in the refuge and that I will be available to help in the future. I can't wait to see you soon at the grand opening of the Visitor Center.

With much appreciation, John Hartig



### Name: Steve Dushane

Title: Acting Refuge Manager (Project Leader)

Job Description: Lead a talented, multidisciplinary team charged with managing all aspects of an urban, international wildlife refuge.

Years at DRIWR: 13

Years with the USFWS: 24

Career goals: Continue developing leadership skills and move into a permanent Project Leader or Refuge Supervisor position.

Favorite thing about the Refuge: The amount of wildlife that actually use and depend on the refuge and how the refuge habitats act as safe haven and stopover habitat in a highly urbanized, industrial environment.

Favorite animal: Any member of the Canidae family. (Dogs, wolves, fox, coyote etc.)

Favorite Bird: Bobolink

Favorite Plant: Prairie dock



### What a Fine Mess

When someone leaves a job, you may often hear things like "What a fine mess they left us in" or "How will we do this without them"? Well, with John Hartig's departure due to his well-deserved retirement, YOU should have no worries at all. Neither of those statements is remotely applicable.

John has set this refuge on a path for success and I have all the faith in the world that the incredible team that has been developed over the past 13 years is more than up for the challenge.

The Refuge Manager position will be filled in the not-so-distant future, however, in the interim, I have been assigned the role of Acting Refuge Manager. After thirteen years as the Deputy Refuge Manager working with John, the transition should be smooth and unnoticeable. During this time of transition into new leadership, new challenges and new adventures, the plan is "business as usual". The only change I am starting to notice is that I spend more time at my desk now.

Feel free to contact me at [steve\\_dushane@fws.gov](mailto:steve_dushane@fws.gov) or give me a call at 734-692-7604

Go ahead and ask us the question. We know it is on your mind. We know you are curious. You may have asked this question before and are hoping for a different response! "When will the visitor center open to the public? While we are at it, how about the fishing pier too?"

Perhaps you won't be too surprised to hear the answer - we are still waiting on a firm date for the grand opening, but we expect it to be in 2018. We know this is frustrating. Maybe you assisted with a tree planting in the Refuge Gateway, perhaps you contributed to one of the funding campaigns to build the fishing pier, or maybe you drive by the site every day and watch the slow but steady construction progress. In other words, you are ready to have a place to fully immerse in nature, right outside your back door. Please know we share your frustration.

This is the fourth visitor center construction I have been involved with for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it is always a frustrating experience. This is why I think it is so important for you to realize we are indeed working to hit the ground running when we open. We expect over 100,000 visitors in the first year and are attempting to anticipate their needs and desires. This is where you come in, not just as a visitor but as a volunteer.

High visitation brings a tremendous amount of energy and excitement. Hence we need people who are interested in sharing their love for nature, who love interacting with people from all backgrounds, and even those who like to stay out of site behind the scenes. If you haven't had a chance to check out the new **2018 Volunteer Position Descriptions** on our web site, you may be surprised to see some of the latest offerings. ([www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit\\_River/what\\_we\\_do/get\\_involved.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River/what_we_do/get_involved.html))

Perhaps you are an avid hiker or just someone who likes to get their hands dirty. Consider becoming a **Trail Upkeep Volunteer**. We strive to keep refuge trails up to high standards so everyone feels welcomed and comfortable hiking on them. This volunteer position performs all aspects of trail maintenance and construction.

If you are a social butterfly and just love interacting with people, we could use your help as a **Visitor Center Greeter and Nature Store Volunteer**. Duties include cheerfully greeting visitors and assisting them to connect to refuge lands through a variety of recreational opportunities.

Do you love to play with flowers? If so, consider becoming a **Volunteer Gardner** and assist us with maintaining the native plantings around the visitor center.

Maybe you are good with power tools and do your best work away from the public. **Volunteer Maintenance Workers** are needed to perform light to moderate maintenance work such as mowing, light construction or carpentry, litter pickup and general upkeep of refuge property.

Or maybe your specialty is telling fish stories and getting others "hooked" on fishing. If so, the **Fishing Pier Volunteer Monitor** may be the position for you. There is NO expectation these volunteers will provide law enforcement coverage, just a welcoming face. FYI - the fishing pier construction is now complete and will open with the opening of the visitor center. All are advised to please remain off the pier for safety reasons as the area is still considered a federal construction site until the visitor center is opened.

As you can see we are in the midst of planning, installing signage, improving trails, piloting environmental educational programming, redesigning brochures, updating site lines and training volunteers. So now is the time to get on the master list of volunteers with me (Jody\_DeMeyere@fws.gov) and be ready when the call comes to get started. We look forward to becoming a destination for family friendly nature exploring in 2018 and into the future!

## Jody's Notes

By: Jody DeMeyere, Visitor Services Manager

## Conservation Weed Management Continues

The 2017 field season has long come to a close, but some of its effects will be felt for years to come. 2017 was the first full year after the Ford Marsh restoration project and the results have been spectacular! The native plants found in the unit have exploded as a result providing over 240 acres of prime waterfowl and eagle habitat right on the shoreline of western Lake Erie.

A similar project was also completed in late 2017 at the Fix Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and is now open for self-exploration. The installation of a water management pump allows the control of water levels to provide wetland habitat for migratory birds. We look forward to the 2018 summer season to determine the results of this project as well. A total of 366.45 acres of Phragmites were treated in the Detroit River - Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). This was made possible after a total of 8,588 acres were surveyed by Biological Technicians Jake Bonello, Tyler Dolin and Nicole LaFleur in efforts to continue the early detection and rapid response of invasive species in the region. Work will continue with early detection and rapid response into the next two years thanks to the CWMA awarded a Sustain our Great Lakes grant by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to further the eradication of invasive species, primarily Phragmites. Areas to be covered will be from the Humbug Marsh Unit to the Michigan - Ohio border along the Lake Erie coastal wetlands to ensure continued health of our coastal wetlands.

**March 17, 2018** Growing Great Gardens WCCC Downriver Campus  
A spectacular day of gardening, learning and fun! Stop by and visit our table.

**March 27, 2018** Trenton Theater Trenton Village Theatre  
Film Screening  
Nature related film showing in local movie theater

**April 14, 2018** Monroe Earth Day Expo Monroe County Community College  
Family-friendly activities include prize drawings, entertainment, educational exhibits, crafts and activities for children.

**April 21, 2018** Friends of the Detroit River Clean Up Rotary Park, Trenton, MI  
In late April each year, a flotilla of small boats ferries eager volunteers out to various islands and shorelines in the Lower Detroit River to collect the accumulated debris that has collected over the past year. Register with Friends of the Detroit River directly.

**April TBD, 2018** Healthy Downriver Southgate Holiday Inn Family Expo  
This FREE event provides resources to help build and maintain strong, happy, healthy families!

**May 5, 2018** Refuge Open House Gibraltar Bay Unit, Grosse Ile  
Theme: International Migratory Bird Day - includes family friendly activities and guided birding hikes

**May 12, 2018** Sturgeon Day Milliken State Park, Detroit  
Theme: Migration is Magical - includes family friendly activities related to sturgeon and bird migration.

**May 19, 2018** Crosswinds Marsh Nature Fest Crosswinds Marsh (New Boston, MI)  
Loads of interactive family activities related to nature from a variety of nature based organizations

**June 9, 2018** Refuge Open House Gibraltar Bay Unit, Grosse Ile  
Theme: Fishing is Fantastic - includes activities related to fishing such as casting, baiting hooks and knots

**June 9, 2018** Greenfield Village Greenfield Village  
Get Outdoors Event  
This annual event encourages healthy, active outdoor fun. A full schedule of activities is planned: an environmental program in the Village Pavilion, an afternoon nature hike, presentations by historic forest ranger on horseback.

**June 10, 2018** Kids Free Fishing Event Millikan State Park, Detroit  
Enjoy family friendly fishing activities on the Detroit Riverwalk - this is a free fishing weekend so no licenses are required.

**June 23-24, 2018** Trenton Summer Festival Downtown Trenton, MI  
Join over 100,000 visitors, over 200 artists, craftsmen and many festival food vendors for the 43rd annual Trenton Summer Festival!

**June 23-24, 2018** Detroit River Days RiverWalk, downtown Detroit  
This one of a kind festival takes place along the Detroit Riverfront. Now in its twelfth year, River Days is a celebration of Detroit's RiverWalk with activities on land and water. Experience all the RiverWalk has to offer, from the jet-ski demos to live music, sand sculptures, delicious eats and much more!



# IWRA Calendar of Events





# No Teacher Left Inside

Teachers jump off trail to share their knowledge of milkweed.

**By: Jennie Braatz**  
Visitor Services Park Ranger

“Poison Ivy! Come quick, I found some!” isn’t usually an exclamation you hear shouted with enthusiasm, however, get a group of nature loving teachers together and the day is full of these entertaining tangents.

Do you remember that teacher you had as a child? The one that let you have class outside when the walls felt like they were closing in? The one that took you on a fieldtrip to the woods and walked away just as dirty (if not dirtier) as the students? Oh come on, you know the one whose eyes lit up with delight when you brought them the remains of some dead rodent you found in the woods! If you were a lucky kid you had at least one teacher like this, imagine 13 of these teachers all in one place...outside. Yes, inner children were let loose on Humbug Marsh and it was all for the good of future generations.

This group of teachers is the first cohort in the pilot year of the Partner Teacher Program with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge Partner Teacher Program is where motivated teachers receive training on programs developed by the refuge. They then can borrow resources and use the programming at school, in the schoolyard, on the refuge, and just about anywhere they can make it happen. By having a Partner Teacher Program, the refuge is able to reach more students throughout the year. Over time as more teachers are trained the number of students will increase, making the program far-reaching and sustainable.

The programs developed by the refuge cover subjects such as water quality monitoring; bird identification; to practices in how students can become more connected to nature. Being in the first year this is a crucial time for evolution of the program as the teachers are prepared to provide feedback on the resources and share their best practices on how to make the programs better for future use.

The first workshop took place in August of 2017. More workshops will be delivered in the future to train passionate teachers as well as refreshers and brain storming sessions to adjust the program as needed. If you are interested in learning more about this program , or if you have ideas you would like to share with the program, please contact Jennie Braatz at [jennifer\\_braatz@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_braatz@fws.gov).




**PSST!  
DONT MISS IT...**

**HAWKWATCH 2017 REPORT  
posted nationally AT  
[DRHAWKWATCH.ORG](http://DRHAWKWATCH.ORG)**

# Thank You for an Amazing Year!

We are honored to share in your passion for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and truly appreciate the tremendous amount of support given in 2017. Everything from the continued habitat management work performed by the amazing hard-working Stewardship Crews, to what often seems the never ending fundraising needed.

It was with your help we were able to put the Project S.N.A.P. Mosaic Mural into production (to be unveiled with the visitor center grand opening), build financial capacity to have a Nature Store in the soon-to-open visitor center with an adventure aboard the BaySail Appledore Schooner on a beautiful summer evening, and the impressive participation in the Patronicity fundraising campaign for the fishing pier!

Listed below are the 4th quarter donors. Please forgive us for any omissions, we sincerely say thank you all!

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## Big Six

Colina Foundation  
Huron Valley Sportsfishing Club  
Roundhouse BBQ

## Environmental Education

Blair Jones  
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## Fishing Pier

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## Fishing Pier - Patronicity

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Lorraine Watson

## Natural Playscape

Robert & Claire Brown  
Ralph C. Wilson Foundation

## Stewardship

Flat Rock Community Gardeners  
- Taylor Unit  
State of Michigan

## 2018 Annual Benefit Dinner

# SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 21, 2018

THE BENTLEY BANQUET AND  
CONFERENCE CENTER



13TH ANNUAL  
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