

Fall 2016

THE WILDSIDE

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



IN THIS ISSUE:
SCHOOL SHIP DOCK AND FISHING PIER NEARLY COMPLETE
INVASIVE SPECIES CREW FINISHES SECOND SEASON
COYOTE DIETS IN SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

PHOTO CREDIT: JAKE BONELLO

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 and 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.

IWRA Email: 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

Dr. John Hartig • Refuge Manager
Steve Dushane • Assistant Refuge Manager
Jody DeMeyere • Visitor Services Manager
Jennifer Braatz • Visitor Services Park Ranger
Greg Norwood • Biologist
Jake Bonello (Pathways) • Biological Support
John Nicely • Maintenance Mechanic
Anna Cook • Administrative Assistant
Robert Primeau • Landscape Designer

IWRA 2016 Board of Directors

Richard G. Micka • Chair
Gary R. Kirsh • Vice Chair, ITC Holdings Company
Tim Bowman • Treasurer, Monroe Bank & Trust
Roberta Urbani • Secretary, DTE Energy
Denis Boismier • City of Gibraltar
Mary Bohling • Michigan Sea Grant
Gary Dawson • Consumers Energy
Joann Gonyea • City of Trenton
Joseph Hemming • HemmingLaw
Elizabeth Iszler • Wayne County Parks
Paul Muelle • Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority
Bob Ranka • Ducks Unlimited
Richard Skoglund
Anita Twardesky • Riverside Kayak Connection
Dick Whitwam • Pte. Moulle Waterfowl Festival
Joann Van Aken • Executive Director



www.facebook.com/DetroitRiverIWR
www.facebook.com/IWRA

Photo credits Rik Burgoyne

A Message from the Alliance Chair

On July 29, 2016, the Refuge grew a little larger. By 35 acres, to be exact. The Honorable John Dingell and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell were on hand with a number of dignitaries to witness the transfer of land from the Port of Monroe to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Another Great Day!

Richard G. Micka, Chair
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board



DRIWR Grows a Little Bigger!



John Dingell looks on as John Hartig shake hands with Consul General of Canada Douglas George during the Port of Monroe transfer event. Photo courtesy of Jody Egen.

Can you guess "Where Steve is"?



Hint: This new destination will offer some of the best views of the Refuge and recreation for visitors of all ages! Email your answer to iwr_alliance@yahoo.com. The first correct guess will receive a Nature Store tote bag!

From the Refuge Manager **Refuge Continues To Grow Through Partnerships!**

John H. Hartig



In 2001, the refuge was founded on partnerships and today it continues to grow through partnerships. Another good example of such partnerships is when the Port of Monroe announced in July that it had transferred 35 acres of land in Monroe County to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help build the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and 33 acres of land to the National Park Service to help build the River Raisin National Battlefield Park in Monroe. The refuge's tract is located just west of the Refuge's 240-acre Ford Marsh Unit, near the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, near Sterling State Park owned and managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and along the River Raisin Heritage Trail – a greenway trail that links downtown Monroe to unique natural resource and historical assets.

The refuge's tract is made up of permanent and seasonal wetlands, as well as some forested uplands, and is hydraulically connected to marshes along Lake Erie. These two donations are significant because they help to:

- Extend an important wildlife corridor for the International Wildlife Refuge;
- Provide a natural buffer for the National Battlefield, thus enhancing the visitors' experience;
- Support the City of Monroe master plan for redevelopment of the area
- Provide a unique opportunity to interpret the Battlefield and Refuge along the River Raisin Heritage Trail.

"This land donation by the Port of Monroe to the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is another excellent example where public-private partnerships can enhance the quality of life in a community," noted Monroe Mayor Robert Clark.

Visitor Service News Visitor Center Greeter and Nature Store Volunteers

In the Spring 2016 newsletter, we wrote about upcoming training for folks interested in the Visitor Center Greeter and Nature Store Volunteer position. The response has been tremendous. We are excited to have an energetic group of people willing to share their passion and knowledge with visitors. These trainings will begin with a basic description of how we plan to manage these volunteers and a brief description of the job duties. Then we will tour a few refuge units including Gibraltar Bay on Grosse Ile; the Refuge Gateway in Trenton; Humbug Marsh between the towns of Trenton and Gibraltar; and the Strong, Fix and Brancheau Units in Monroe County.



Rendering of the Visitor Center Reception desk and entry to the Nature Store, where volunteers will be needed.

This educational tour is not the only training we will provide to interested volunteers. Before the building opens to the public, we will host training dates at the center to orientate volunteers to the duties, space and responsibilities. The first training tour on Friday, October 7 is currently filled. However, if there is additional interest we are able to add additional training opportunities. Please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere, at jody_demeyere@fws.gov to express your interest. Be sure to mention if weekend or weekdays are better for your schedule.



Masonry and siding are up on the exterior! These building materials help the visitor center reach Gold LEED certification.

Visitor Center Update



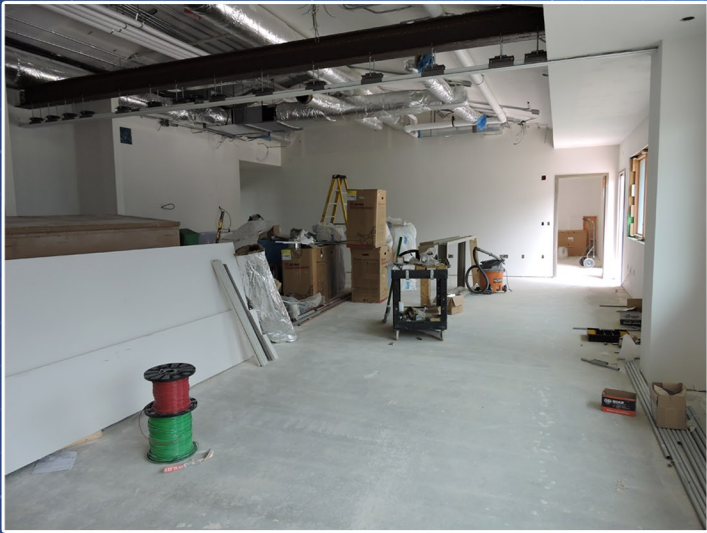
If you gaze through the drywall dust, construction debris, ladders and construction workers you will see progress is being made on the brand new visitor center! This 12,000 square foot, Gold-LEED certified building is coming to life. The center will offer a variety of amenities for visitors, including an interactive exhibit space to hone your wildlife observation skills and a showcase of simple, every day conservation activities. For those interested in quiet observation throughout the seasons, the observation lounge with its comfy furniture and revolving artwork will entice repeat visits. In addition, a 90-seat multi-purpose room will be available for community groups to utilize for meetings and programming.

We are actively seeking people interested in sharing their passion and knowledge to become docents, greeters, gardeners and maintenance volunteers. We have all heard it takes a village to raise a child. Well, we have a whole slew of children in the Metro Detroit area to engage in nature, so we need a mass of volunteers willing to help us.

If you have the time and energy, please contact Visitor Services Manager, Jody DeMeyere, at jody_demeyere@fws.gov. Be sure to list your strengths and specifically how you may be willing to assist.



We are (not so) patiently waiting for visitors to greet at the reception desk!



This dividable multipurpose room will be a valuable educational resource!



The main exhibit room will be sure to wow visitors.



View from a sitting area looking out towards the river- the perfect spot to enjoy a cup of coffee or read a book.



Staff wing of the visitor center, containing offices, resource rooms, and work spaces.

Construction of School Ship Dock and Fishing Pier Nearly Complete

Robert Primeau

After months of work in wind, rain, snow, and sun, the School Ship Dock and Fishing Pier is nearing completion. The facility's boardwalk now stretches 740 feet east into the Detroit River. At the end of the boardwalk a 200-foot long pier sits in the river like an artificial island and allows a breathtaking 360-degree view of the River, Humbug Marsh, and Grosse Ile. Such views were previously only available by boat.



Construction of the fishing pier is almost finished, including installation of benches and railings.

Work on the facility's structural steel, composite decking, steel railings, and shoreline connections have been finalized. Contemporary metal benches have also been installed along the pier. Construction will be complete in a few short months with the installation of shade structures, electrical connections, and the attachment of a floating dock for the school ship.

The school ship dock will serve as home base for Michigan Sea Grant's school ship. This ship will provide field trip and research opportunities for area schoolchildren.

Because this is an active construction site, river-goers are instructed not to come near the pier or boardwalk.

Following completion, the pier will allow for free fishing-access, unforgettable views, and educational opportunities when the Refuge Gateway opens in 2017.



Dear Friends of the Refuge,

It's never too early to share good news! You may already be aware the Visitor Center for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) is now under construction, and we're excited to share it is at 60% completion. Day by day we're getting closer to opening the doors to the seven million people within a forty-five minute drive. But, before we do we need some help.

Imagine walking into this new, Gold LEED certified building, with its majestic views of the Detroit River, and on the entry wall is a 6' x 7' mosaic mural created from artwork collected by thousands of students and families of all ages in the area that has raised awareness of the important role we all have in protecting the land, water and wildlife living in the area.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) would like to offer you the opportunity to be a part of this colorful Project S.N.A.P. mosaic mural. The \$65,000 project has been awarded a challenge grant of \$20,000 and we are looking for support from five \$1,000 sponsors and five \$5,000 sponsors to complete the project.

We ask you please consider becoming a recognized sponsor of what will serve as a permanent tribute to the importance of environmental stewardship.

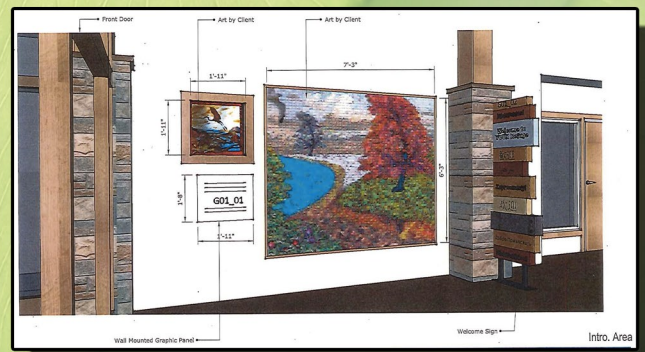
Recognition will be given with a Gift of \$5,000:

- On 3,000 posters being give to each of the 3,000 individuals whose artwork will be included in the mural
- In the WILDSIDE Newsletters and Media events
- Plus, we can coordinate a community event for artwork collection to feature your location.

Thank you for your consideration.

Please contact IWRA Executive Director, Joann Van Aken at 734-692-7671 or iwr_alliance@yahoo.com

Next public artwork collection will be at Hawkfest and Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival



Rendering of the location of the mosaic mural in the Visitor Center. (Actual artwork and design not depicted).

Invasive Species Crew Finishes Second Season

Nicole LaFleur

As the second field season of the invasive species crew comes to an end, we are left with resounding theme of the summer: new. We used new methods, found new records of native species, and even explored some new units as the refuge continues to grow in acquisitions and cooperative management agreements.

While 2015 was in no way unsuccessful, this year we improved efficiency by utilizing the Collector app for ArcGis. The app was installed on three tablets (with waterproof cases, of course!) that were used to collect data in the field. Once connected to the Internet at the end of the day, a simple hit of the sync button entered all of the data automatically. Another benefit of the app was that we could split up: instead of one GPS and one data sheet, each member of the team had the ability to take independent points, meaning that we could cover more ground in less time. In 2015 we surveyed 7,860 acres, but in 2016 we surveyed 8,831 acres – and finished a week earlier!

After completion of the surveys, we began treatment on the 414 acres of Phragmites that we mapped. We have high hopes for the effectiveness of these treatments based on observations from last year's management efforts. Phragmites control may seem like a never-ending battle, but the improvements in biodiversity and habitat that we are seeing in some units makes the effort worth it. For example, this year's discovery of giant arrowhead (*Sagittaria montevidensis*) in several units is a promising indicator that previously suppressed seed banks are getting a shot at germination.

Speaking of new species, Mullein fox glove (*Dasistoma macrophylla*) and whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) were two more previously undocumented records found on the refuge during our 2016 surveys. Although our main objective is to map invasive species, being able to visit and become familiar with different refuge units allows us to learn more about each unique ecosystem. We had a great summer and can't wait to see the results in the future!



We were able to do most of our surveys from kayaks. Efficient and fun!

The Search is On for Great Lakes Non-native Species

Jessica Loughner

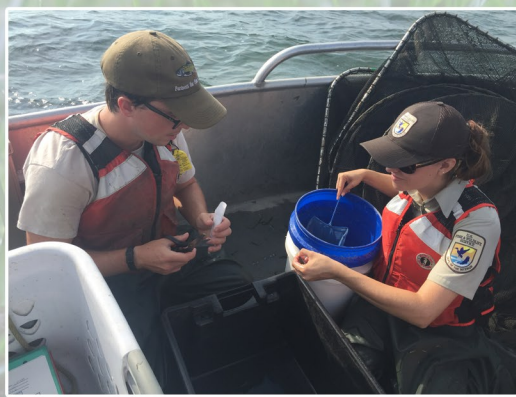
In the Great Lakes, roughly 180 aquatic non-native and invasive species have been reported over time. Non-native aquatic species can enter the Great Lakes in a variety of ways, such as ballast water from ships, canals, aquarium release and bait release. If these species become established and invasive, they can cause ecological and economic impacts, such as reduced habitat and food available to native fish species, loss of recreational and commercial fishing income, and expense associated with control measures. In 2013, the USFWS Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) implemented a new early-detection monitoring program to proactively try to detect new non-native aquatic species before they become invasive. Early detection of new species may allow for successful control measures to be implemented and also may identify pathways that require greater regulation to stop introduction of more species in the future.

The Alpena FWCO – Waterford Substation conducts early detection surveillance by looking for larval, juvenile, and adult fishes, as well as amphipods, which are small crustaceans, and bivalve mussels in lakes Erie and Huron and their connecting waters (e.g., the St. Clair and Detroit rivers). Sampling for all life stages of fish increases the chance of detecting new species. Larval fish are collected at night using small-mesh nets towed at the surface and light traps set for 4-6 hours. Adult and juvenile fishes are collected by paired fyke netting, trawling, minnow trapping and electrofishing. Fin clips are taken from select juvenile and adult fish species for genetics. Smaller traps are used for collecting amphipods and bivalves.

In the laboratory at the EPA office in Grosse Ile, the Alpena FWCO-Waterford Substation staff processes samples that were taken over the course of the field season. Larval fish are sorted from the

samples collected with the paired bongo net and light traps to be genetically identified by EPA staff in Duluth, Minnesota, along with bivalve samples. Amphipod and snails that were collected are physically identified by staff.

Early detection of non-native species is critical for prevention of new species becoming established in the Great Lakes. To date, no new non-native species have been detected by Alpena FWCO researchers, but efforts to stop non-native species should not be limited to scientists.



Fisheries technicians identifying fish from a fyke net set in the Detroit River and taking fin clips. Photo: FWS

Everyone can help! To help prevent the spread of non-native and invasive species, please do not release aquarium pets into the wild, clean and disinfect fishing boats and equipment, and never release bait. Other tips and information on the prevention of spreading invasive species are available here: <https://www.fws.gov/invasives/what-you-can-do.html> Results of our work so far can be found here: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/programs.html>

Coyote Diets in Southeastern Michigan

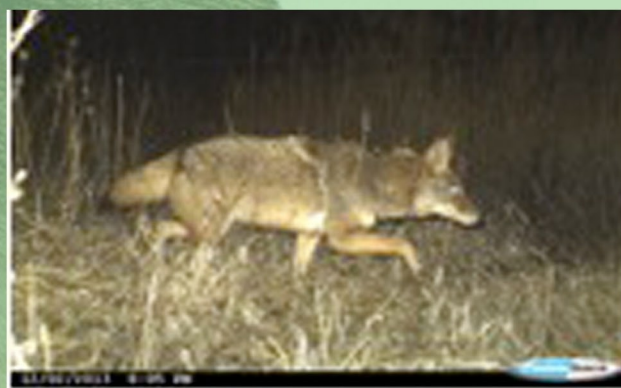
Bill Dodge

Bill Dodge recently received his PhD in biology from Wayne State University (2016) for his research on the ecology of coyotes in the greater Detroit area of southeastern Michigan. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was one of his study sites, where coyote scats used for dietary analysis were collected, small mammals were trapped, and rabbit pellets counted.

My research on coyote diets and foraging patterns in the greater Detroit area of southeastern Michigan found that coyotes feed almost exclusively on natural foods. Small rodents, eastern cottontail rabbit, and white-tailed deer were the primary prey of coyotes, a pattern that agrees with most other studies of urban coyotes. Unlike other studies of coyote diets in developed areas however, I found that raccoon and woodchuck often made up > 10% and white-tailed deer > 20% of coyote diets. Because white-tailed deer, as well as raccoon and woodchuck, can be formidable prey for a 30 – 40 lb. coyote, I speculate that most of what coyotes are consuming of these three prey is primarily from road-killed animals. Outside of developed areas, coyotes often obtain the majority of their food from scavenging carcasses of wolf-killed elk or deer. Coyotes' scavenging on carcasses of road-killed deer as well as other wildlife is potentially a major source of food for coyotes in metropolitan areas. This may be uniquely relevant in Michigan, which consistently records some of the highest numbers of deer vehicle collisions in the Midwest, approximately 70% of which occur in the southern part of the state.

Interestingly, coyote diets differed between highly developed urban areas and less developed suburbs (developed being a relative term). Coyotes in the suburbs consumed more white-tailed deer (20% of diet) and rabbits (39% of diet) than coyotes in urban areas (white-tailed: deer 8%, rabbits: 24%).

Coyotes residing in urban areas consumed more small rodents (mostly mice and voles; 38% of diet) than their counterparts in the suburbs where small rodents made up only 19% of coyote diets. We also noted coyotes feeding on muskrats (9% of their diet in the suburbs and 3% in urban areas), which has not been widely reported from other studies. Also, like most other studies, cat and dog made up only a small percentage of coyote diets; less than 2% for dog, and less than 0.25% for cat. Coyotes may view outdoor cats and unsupervised small dogs as prey, whereas larger dogs may be seen as a threat. Although domestic dogs may retain some of their non-domestic instincts (e.g., peeing on fire hydrants) they do not behave like coyotes when they encounter coyotes or evidence of coyotes (scat, tracks, e.g.). An inappropriate behavioral response (as interpreted by a coyote) by a domestic dog may elicit an attack especially during the breeding and pup rearing seasons. Advice for pet owners is to keep cats indoors and never leave small dogs unattended, particularly at night.



**A coyote in River Rouge captured on a trail cam.
Photo: J. Cousino**

Thank You Third Quarter Donors!

Nature Store Support:

- Andrew Arnoldy
- Mary Batcheller
- Edwin & Betty Leonard
- Vincent & Joanne Maltese
- Andrew Podczervinski

Mosaic Mural Support:

- Joseph & Betsy Hemming
- Wyandot of Anderdon Nation

Visitor Center Outdoor Furniture

- Chris Hancock - Round House BBQ

Visitor Center Observation Room 1

- La-Z-Boy Incorporated

In honor of Mr. Dingell's 90th Birthday:

- Eric Kessler

Matching Donation:

- Allstate - Diane Krause

Stewardship Donation:

- Ford Motor Company - Ford MODEL Team
- Greening of Detroit Tree Planters

General Support:

- Great Lakes Steel Salaried Retirees Club
- DTE Energy McCarthy Award

We are honored to share your support of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

We truly appreciate all support given, whether in donations or in-kind services.

Please forgive us for any omissions from this quarter.

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** and your continued support!

Nature Store Naming Contest

What kind of name is Nature Store, anyway? We bet you can come up with something better! Help us give the nature store a name that it deserves. The store will be located inside the Visitor Center, where guests can purchase books, souvenirs, and gifts. Please send all suggestions to iwr_alliance@yahoo.com by October 31. You can also submit suggestions during traveling nature store events. *The winning name will be announced at our Holiday Shop on November 17.*

Traveling Nature Store *at the* Gibraltar Farm Market



**Wednesday,
September 28
1:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Gibraltar Community Center:
Boblo Pavilion**

Come on by and say hello! See you there!

Kick off the season with us!

Nature Store Holiday Shop

TV's Grand Event
November 17, 2016
4:00 – 8:00 pm

Unique wildlife-themed gifts • Refreshments • Great Company



International Wildlife Refuge Alliance
9311 Groh Road
Grosse Ile, Michigan 48138
iwralliance.org

US Postage
PAID
Nonprofit
Organization
Permit #153
Wyandotte, MI