

THE WILDSIDE

FALL/WINTER 2009

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



IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Upcoming events!*
- *Daylighting the Monguagon Drain!*
- *A new method for monitoring Terns!*
- *...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” group 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 and fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver for more periodic updates.



Construction begins on Refuge Gateway: Daylighting the Monguagon Drain

by Becca Robinson, DRIWR

In August construction began on the first phase of the Refuge Gateway: Daylighting the Monguagon Drain! *Daylighting* is a green design strategy that means *to expose a waterway that is currently conveyed underground in a pipe or culvert*. With this project, the water flowing through the Monguagon Drain will be uncovered in the Refuge Gateway. The stormwater that previously traveled in underground pipes into the Detroit River will now flow into a pond and wetland system designed to improve both water quality and wildlife habitat value, while creating a dynamic visual experience for our visitors.

This project marks the beginning of the fulfillment of a long term vision for the Refuge Gateway, which will result in restored wildlife habitat, world-class educational facilities, and recreational opportunities for a wide diversity of individuals. The Refuge Gateway, immediately north of the Humbug Marsh Unit in Trenton, Michigan, is owned by Wayne County. The project was designed by Hamilton Anderson Associates and construction for this portion of the project is being completed by GlenCorp, Inc. In addition to the creation of a pond and wetland system, grading of the site and an access road for the Refuge Gateway will be completed this summer.

Stay tuned for volunteer opportunities to help with planting the site – a great step to restoring native vegetation and improving wildlife habitat!

A New Method to Monitor Common Terns Remotely

Greg Norwood, DRIWR • Photo: Sayer Seely



The Wayne County Grosse Ile Free Bridge provides habitat for one of the largest colonies of common terns, a state threatened bird species, in Michigan. This past summer, Detroit River IWR staff piloted a new technique to monitor the terns and their “nest attentiveness”. Though the method has been used elsewhere, it has not been used with the common tern. Small temperature loggers called i-buttons (Thermochron iButton, Maxim Integrated Products, Inc., Sunnyvale, CA; model DS1922L) were hidden at the bottom of the common tern nests. Using a control placed next to the nest, Refuge staff could document the frequency and timing of “off-bouts” when the adults temporarily abandon the nest due to predation in the colony. This information will allow managers to understand the frequency of predation and how this relates to nest attentiveness. For instance, off-bouts typically occurred at approximately 1 hour after sunset, and lasted until one hour before sunrise. This type of abandonment prolongs the incubation period to more than 10 days longer than if no abandonment occurred and exposes the eggs to cold temperatures and weather events. Due to the success of the pilot work, it is hoped a more concerted effort will be taken in the future to fully understand the predation/ disturbance dynamics occurring at this particular colony. Questions that hope to be answered include: How does the frequency of disturbance relate to how often terns abandon at night? Is abandonment less likely to occur during poor weather? What drives the length of abandonment? Thank you to Wayne County for allowing researchers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study the common tern, conserve this Detroit River population, and try to answer the above questions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall/Winter 2009

September 12-13 • Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival

Visit the DRIWR booth at the Pte. Mouillee State Game Area and children can test their waterfowl IQ.

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September 19-20 • Hawk Fest

Visit our booth at Lake Erie Metropark and children can test their Hawk IQ.

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September 26 • National Public Lands Day • 9:30am-Noon

Join us at the Humbug Marsh Unit for this nationwide volunteer event.

Open House 1pm-4pm

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October 3 • Hawk ID • 11am

Meet USFWS staff at the boat launch in Lake Erie Metropark for some identification tips and information on the raptors migrating above. Suitable for beginners as well as seasoned birders.

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October 11-17 • National Wildlife Refuge Week

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October 11 • The Big Sit

Add to our birding list at Humbug Marsh.

Open House 6am-5pm

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October 17 • Bird Walk with Greg Norwood • 9am Humbug Marsh Unit

Open House 9am-3pm

Hawk ID at boat launch in Lake Erie Metropark Noon

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November 14 • Family Program: Whooo are you? • 10:30am-11:30am

Gather at Humbug Marsh for a program all about owls. All participants will dissect their own owl pellet. Reservation required.

Open House- 9am-2pm

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November 28 • Owl Prowl • 7pm

Join USFWS staff for a nighttime walk through Humbug as we call and listen for owls.

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December 12 • Family Program: Nest Hunt • 10:30am-11:30 am

Participants will learn about different nests and walk through the area to see how many different kinds we can discover.

Reservation required.

Open House 10am-2pm.

Registration and more information contact **Kristi Thiel** at (734) 692-7649 or kristi_thiel@fws.gov

Links:

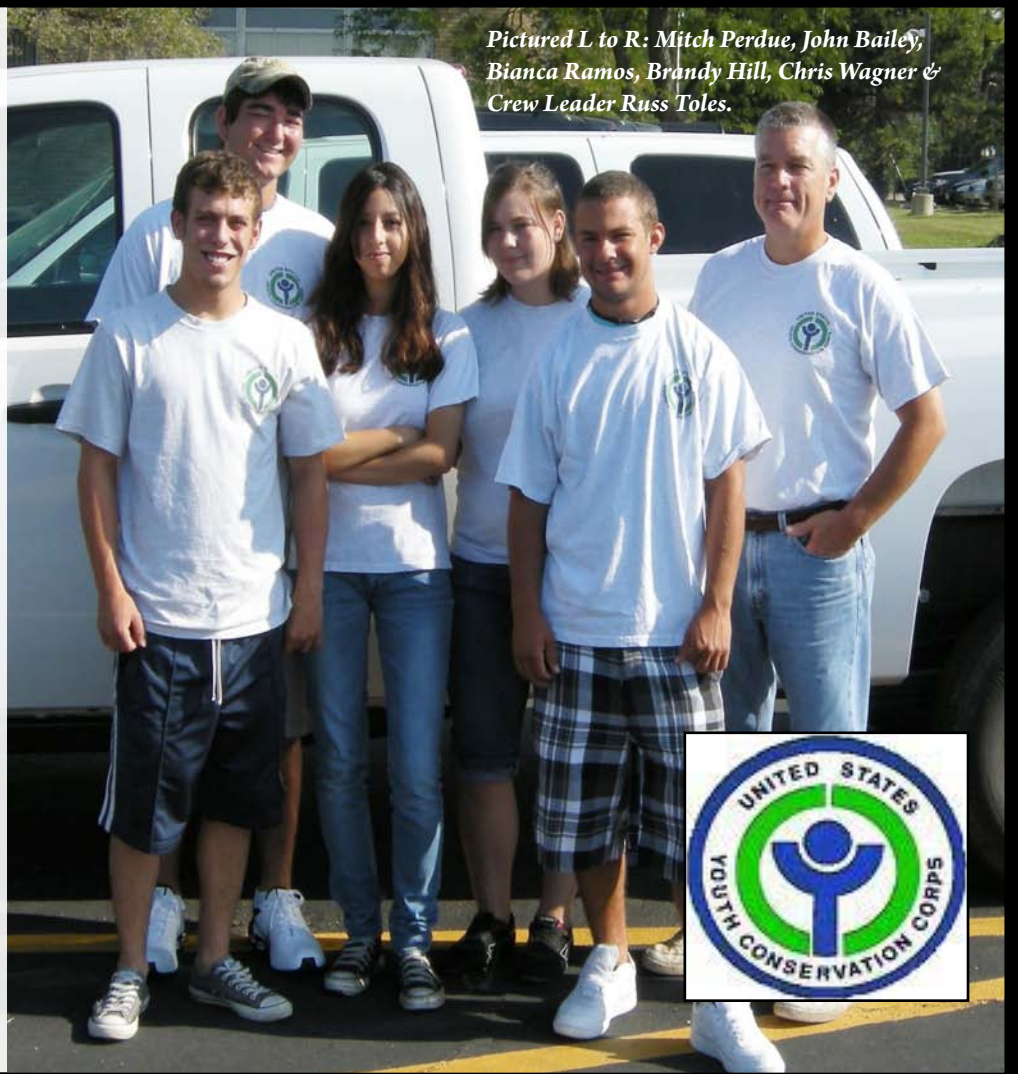
National Public Lands Day www.publiclandsday.org

Big Sit www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx

Youth Conservation Corps at Refuge

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Detroit River IWR) hosted its first Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) this summer. Since the YCC program began in the 1970s, it has worked with many conservation agencies nationwide to provide educational and team building skills for young people. This summer employment program allows men and women to work, earn, and learn by doing projects that further the development and conservation of the nation's natural resources.

The Detroit River IWR hosted a YCC crew consisting of five team members and one crew leader. The crew transformed an out-and-back trail in Humbug Marsh into a 1 1/4 loop by cutting over 1/2 mile of trail. Other projects included removing invasive plant species and prepping a fence for repair by removing growth. In addition to work, the group took educational field trips to the U of M's Environmental Interpretive Center, Cranbrook Institute of Science and Lake Erie Metropark. The crew worked hard all summer long and the public can appreciate their efforts by walking the trail at any of the Humbug Marsh Open Houses.



Pictured L to R: Mitch Perdue, John Bailey, Bianca Ramos, Brandy Hill, Chris Wagner & Crew Leader Russ Toles.



New Detroit River Hawk Watch Counter

by Greg Norwood, DRIWR

We believe we have one of the top counters in the U.S. with Seth Cutright now the official counter of the 2009 Detroit River Hawk Watch. Seth brings with him a great deal of counting experience at other sites, including primary count responsibilities at Cape May Hawk Watch, Sandy Hook Migration Watch, and has had an influential role in the Concordia University Hawk Watch. His great technical skill in bird identification may be helped by his artist's eye in which he has formal training from Concordia University. His other bird work includes Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, tour leader for Land, Water, and Sky Tours, point counts in Florida and Wisconsin, a MAPS station, and Greater Prairie Chicken research for Kansas State University. You can find Seth at one of the two primary count locations, Lake Erie Metropark Boat Launch or the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area Headquarters six days per week from September 1st to November 30th. Welcome aboard, Seth!



Sturgeon Reproduction Documented at Fighting Island Reef!

John H. Hartig, DRIWR Refuge Manager

In May 2009, lake sturgeon spawned on the recently constructed lake sturgeon spawning reef at the head of Fighting Island in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge! This is the first time in 30 years that lake sturgeon, a threatened species in both Michigan and Ontario, have spawned in Canadian waters in this part of the Detroit River. The new spawning reef, constructed at Fighting Island in October 2008, was celebrated as the first Canada-U.S. funded fish habitat restoration project in the Great Lakes. The strong partnership between the United States and Canada, and the dedication of everyone involved in protecting our shared natural resources made this project a reality. The fact that lake sturgeon, an indicator of ecosystem health, are utilizing the reef, provides scientific evidence that this restoration project was a success and further validates the binational pollution prevention and control efforts implemented through the water quality agreements crafted in the early 1970s (e.g., U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, Canada Water Act, and U.S. Clean Water Act).

Even more great news at the Fighting Island site was the discovery of several northern madtom, a fish that is endangered in Michigan and Ontario, and never before confirmed in the mid-reaches of the Detroit River. It is important that scientists continue to monitor the reef to document use of the spawning habitat by other valuable native fish.

Partners in this project include: Environment Canada, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, Essex Region Conservation Authority, U.S. Geological Survey – Great Lakes Science Center, Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, Landmark Engineers Inc., International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Wildlife Habitat Council.

Refuge Volunteer Program

Volunteers play a large and vital role in many organizations as they selflessly share their time, and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is no exception. Volunteers serve on the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board, pick up trash, help remove invasive species, install native plants, and assist with education programs. For more information on how you can get involved contact Kristi Thiel at 734 692-7649 or kristi_thiel@fws.gov.



- **Garlic Mustard Pullers:** Help stop this invasive plant! Join this team and pull out this invasive plant. Volunteers needed from April-June.
- **Buckthorn Busters:** Another invasive, Buckthorn is fought by cutting down the offender and applying pesticide to the stump. Volunteers needed from July through October.
- **Nature Hosts:** Want to see Humbug Marsh open more? Volunteer to host an open house and welcome visitors. Volunteers needed March-November.

All volunteer "teams" will receive an orientation, training and an official US Fish and Wildlife Service Volunteer T-shirt.

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Dr. John Hartig, *Refuge Manager*

Steve Dushane, *Assistant Refuge Manager*

Kristi Thiel, *Park Ranger*

The Wildside Newsletter

Andrew K. Johnson, *Editor*

Eagle Sponsors

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**International Wildlife Refuge
Alliance awards first
'Friends of the Refuge' Awards**

More than 200 people attended the 4th annual benefit dinner for the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance on Friday, June 27 at the Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown Township – one of the management units of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

As part of the upscale outdoor “Summer BBQ in the Refuge,” Congressman John D. Dingell (D-Michigan) received the inaugural “Friend of the Refuge” award for 2009. In addition, DTE Energy received the private sector award and Michael J. Morrin, C.P.A. received the individual award.

“We can’t think of three more fitting individuals and groups to receive our inaugural ‘Friend of the Refuge’ award,” said John Hartig, Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. “The refuge has expanded immensely due to their efforts, and we are proud of their contributions,” he continued.

Congressman Dingell and the late Peter Stroh were instrumental in working with U.S. and Canadian conservationists to make recommendations for furthering collaboration in preserving the unique ecological corridor that became the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Originally 300 acres, the Refuge has grown to more than 5,600 acres in eight years.

This year marked the first time that the annual dinner was held outdoors and within the refuge. The dinner also recognized the many accomplishments within the refuge in 2008. They include, in part: the completion of an environmental education shelter, rustic trails, handicap-accessible trails, a wetland boardwalk, and a pedestrian stream crossing, all in Humbug Marsh unit. In addition, Plum Creek Bay Unit in Monroe County was added to the Refuge, and public outreach programs were increased with a full-time Park Ranger and part-time ornithologist.

Organizations who pledged support as major sponsors in 2009 include: BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, ITC Holdings, Consumers Energy Foundation, and CN Railroad. Sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance office. To join the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance or to learn more about the group, log on to www.iwralliance.org.



National Public Lands Day to be held for 16th year

130,000 Americans will grab shovels, pruning shears and gloves to help improve the nation's public lands on Sept. 26, 2009 as part of National Public Lands Day, an annual event held at over 2,000 sites across the country.

"Wherever Americans go outdoors to explore, hike, fish, paddle, jog or just enjoy nature, that location is likely to be a candidate for a National Public Lands Day event," said Robb Hampton, director of National Public Lands Day, a program of the National Environmental Education Foundation. "For 2009, we will have a special focus on the connection water has on our public lands."

The one-day army of volunteers has an immediate positive impact on public lands. Last year, over 120,000 volunteers planted an estimated 1.6 million trees, fixed hundreds of miles of hiking trails and removed trash at nearly 1,900 sites. Volunteer efforts totaled an estimated \$13 million worth of time and in-kind contributions. This year, the number of sites is expected to grow to more than 2,000 with expected contributions over \$14 million.

YOU CAN HELP BUILD THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Would you like to volunteer? Y or N _____

Donation amount: _____

Please make checks payable to:

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance

Mail to:

IWRA, 9311 Groh Rd. Grosse Ile, MI 48138

Become an annual supporter by making a tax deductible donation to IWRA!

\$15 Mayfly (Sticker)

\$30 Canvasback (Car Decal)

\$60 Walleye (Free Admission to an Alliance Family Event)

\$100 Great Blue Heron (License Plate)

\$250 Lake Sturgeon (Two tickets to the Annual Benefit Dinner and License Plate)

\$500 Mallard (Four tickets to the Annual Benefit Dinner, two VIP reception confirmations and recognition at the Dinner)

Other \$ _____

The “**Let’s Go Outside!**” backpacks are available at each open house. The packs are geared towards children between the ages of 5-12 and are supplied with a bug jar, field guide, journal, binoculars and a cloud identifier. Pick up a pack at the start of your visit to the refuge and return it on your way out. Don’t forget to write about your discoveries in the journal for the next visitor to read.



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