

## Learning Stations and Observation Deck Added to Humbug Marsh

Becca Robinson

Humbug Marsh Unit has a new addition - a wildlife observation platform! Funded by DTE Energy Foundation, it was constructed from reclaimed urban wood and stainless steel providing an overlook of the Monguagon Delta with the eagle nesting platform on Humbug Island in plain view. Special thanks to Richard Mills and Logs to Lumber and Beyond for the fantastic artisanship and quality construction.

Three learning stations, funded by Praxair, have also been added along the accessible and rustic portions of the trail network telling a story to visitors as they walk by, interpreting local habitat and highlighting the significance of this precious ecosystem.



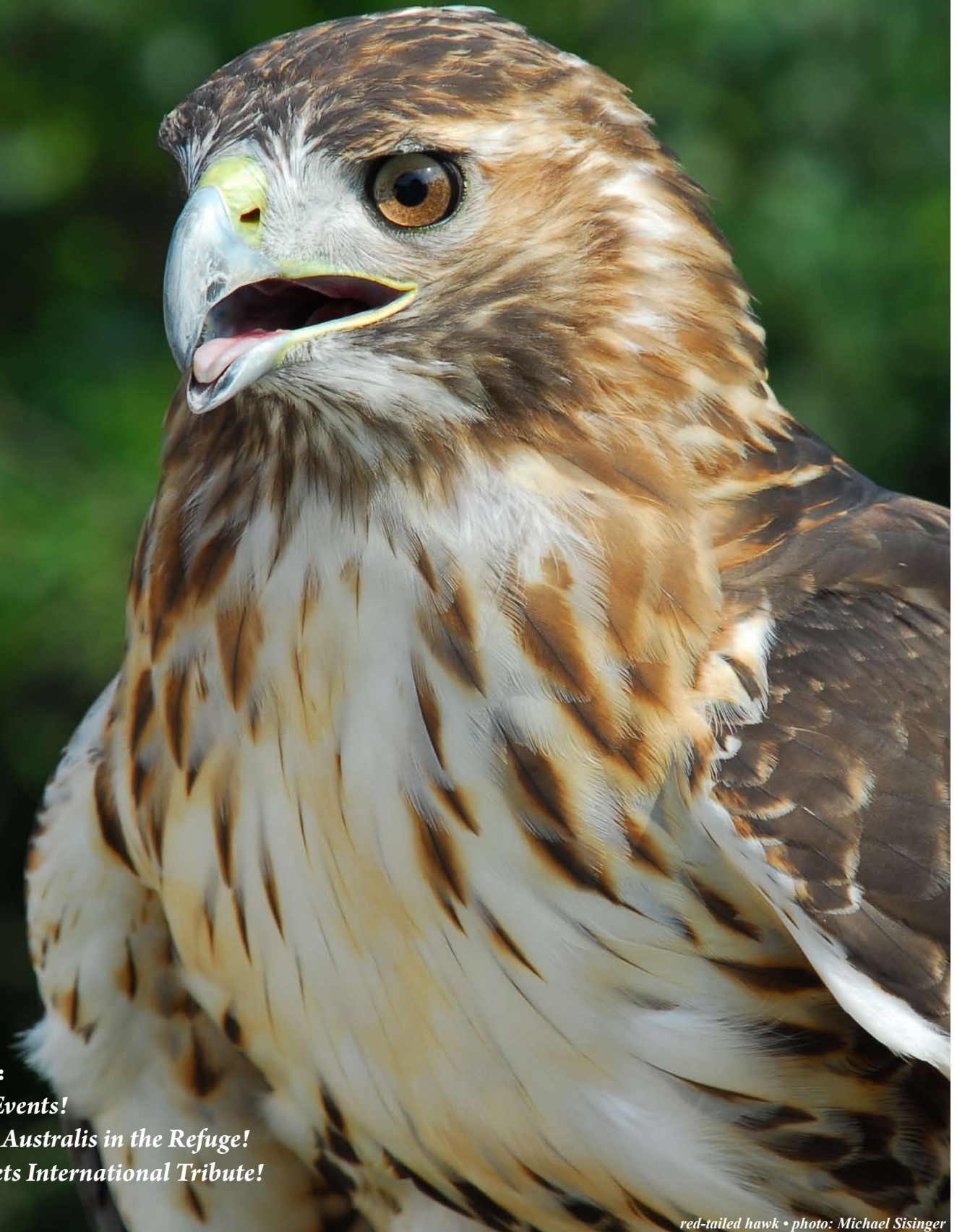
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# THE WILDSIDE

SPRING/SUMMER 2010

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



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red-tailed hawk • photo: Michael Sisinger



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](http://iwralliance.org) and [fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver](http://fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver) for more periodic updates.

### IWRA 2010 Board of Directors:

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- Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager
- Kristi Thiel, Park Ranger

### Eagle Sponsors

- BASF Corporation
- DTE Energy
- ITC Holdings

## Volunteers Make the REFUGE Work!

Last fall volunteers reported for duty at the Refuge Gateway to plant trees and assist the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Staff with numerous tasks.



It is the beginning of a landmark project that will result in the realization of a dream. This dream is to showcase the Refuge to the world, including its 5,700 acres devoted to wildlife in this major urban area along the Detroit River and western Lake Erie.

The Resource has always been there, but the will to preserve it can only be manifest in the structure built to represent it.

*Richard Micka, Chair  
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board*



## The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance now has an Office Manager!

Joann Van Aken arrived the end of November and will serve as a public contact for the Alliance and manage the office operations. She comes from a biology background in water quality and spent time as a National Park Service Ranger. Joann resides in Monroe with her husband, Joel and sons, Derek & Kelsey.

Joann can be reached at 734.692.7671 or [iwr\\_alliance@yahoo.com](mailto:iwr_alliance@yahoo.com)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

To Register: call (734)692-7649.

Events may be subject to change, check calendar on website for updates or call for information.

### April 24

Open House at Humbug Marsh  
9:00am - 3:00 pm

### May 2

Open House at Humbug Marsh  
10:00am - 4:00pm  
Detroit Audubon Society Walk  
2:00pm - 4:00pm

### May 8

International Migratory Bird Day - Celebrate spring migration as birds return to their summer breeding and nesting sites. Please check the website for updates on Refuge activities.

### May 29

Early Bird Open House at Humbug Marsh Unit  
6:00am - 10:00am

### June 5

International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Annual Benefit Dinner  
Pte. Mouillee State Game Area  
Contact  
[iwr\\_alliance@yahoo.com](mailto:iwr_alliance@yahoo.com)

### June 13

Open House at Humbug Marsh Unit  
1:00am - 5:00 pm  
Family Program: Native Butterflies & Moths  
2:00 pm

### June 25, 26

Full Moon Walk - 8:00pm - 10:00pm  
See the refuge in a different light, moonlight!  
Humbug Marsh, Registration required.

### July 10

Trenton Mid-Summer Festival  
Take the free shuttle from the festival to the refuge for free activities and talks.

### July 24

Open House at Humbug Marsh Unit  
9:00am - 3:00pm

### July 24

Family Program: Macroinvertebrate Mayhem  
10:30am - 11:30am

### August 14

Starry, Starry Night!  
Enjoy an evening of star gazing hosted by the Ford Amateur Astronomy club.  
Humbug Marsh, time TBA

### August 29

Evening Open House at Humbug Marsh Unit  
3:00pm - 7:00pm

### Sept. 11, 12

Pte. Mouillee Waterfowl Festival Stop by the Refuge booth in the kid's activity tent for our interactive Duck I.Q.  
Pte. Mouillee State Game Area

### Sept. 18, 19

Hawkfest!  
Our Hawk I.Q. will be set up by the Marshlands Museum.  
Lake Erie Metropark

### Sept. 25

National Public Lands Day  
This nationwide event brings volunteers out to their public lands. Please check website for details in August or call (734)692-7649.  
Location and time TBA.

### October 10-17

National Wildlife Refuge Week  
Check for updates on activities or call (734)692-7649



By: Anna Cook, DRIWR

On April 28, 2009 a tradition between the United States and Canada continued with the biennial State of the Strait Conference. This time the conference was held at the University of Windsor. The U.S and Canada alternate hosting the conference every two years. The theme of the 2009 conference was "Ecological Benefits of Habitat Modification." Over 200 people attended the event, and topics presented included building fish spawning habitats, soft shoreline engineering projects, and wetland restoration. The purpose of the conference is to bring people together that are concerned about the Detroit River and western Lake Erie watershed to discuss the current efforts being undertaken to improve local habitat, and to provide lessons and information to help assess future solutions to habitat restoration.

The State of the Strait Report for this conference was released the beginning of this year. The key findings of this report were that although there have been many positive projects done to help improve wildlife habitat, having specific monitoring programs to keep track of progress and project success is imperative when learning and planning for future projects. It was also found that the smaller projects presented at the conference will prove to be excellent building blocks for future larger and more comprehensive projects with specific long term goals.

A complete copy of this report titled "State of the Strait Report: Ecological Benefits of Habitat Modification" can be found at [www.stateofthestrait.org](http://www.stateofthestrait.org). For more information please contact Anna Cook at (734)692-7672 or [Anna\\_Cook@fws.gov](mailto:Anna_Cook@fws.gov).

## Detroit River Hawk Watch 2009 Season

Greg Norwood, FWS Biologist

Hawk Watch: 83 days of monitoring raptors at the Detroit Rivermouth, Lake Erie Metropark and the Pte. Mouillee State Game area were conducted between September 1 - November 30. 98,577 raptors representing 17 species were counted.

Broad-winged hawks are typically seen in numbers reaching well over 100,000 in the month of September, but only 35,274 were tallied. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks were also counted in lower numbers the last two years. Species in above average numbers sited at the Lake Erie Metropark were the Turkey Vulture and Golden Eagle. Average counts were seen with the Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and the Bald eagle. Many factors play a role in their passages, including cyclic rodent populations.

In 2010, a report will be available showing collected data, utilizing a standardized approach, of counts since 1983.



## New STEP Employee at DRIWR

Anna Cook has joined the Refuge staff as a Student Temporary Education Program (STEP) student. She is a biology and environmental science student at Wayne State University. She brings a strong background in biology and environmental science, along with hands on wildlife experience from working at Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Texas. At the refuge, Anna is working with Canadian and U.S. partners in quantifying the ecological effectiveness of 35 soft engineering projects along the Detroit River.

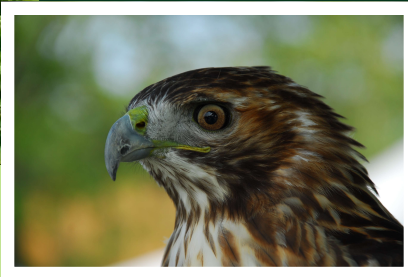


Photo: Michael Sisinger

## From the Refuge Manager...

With ever increasing frequency, I am getting questions on when the Visitor Center will be built. The short answer is that we still have to finish brownfield cleanup and habitat restoration at the Refuge Gateway, raise money through the Capital Campaign, complete final architectural drawings for the Visitor Center, and get required permits that will all realistically take four or more years, depending upon the economy. However, that does not mean that we are standing pat. Consistent with the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the top priority is growing the Refuge while opportunities still exist. We have several potential acquisitions underway that will substantially grow the Refuge. As most of you may have seen last year, Wayne County, the Service, and many other partners completed \$750,000 of work at the Refuge Gateway in Trenton, including daylighting Monguagon Creek, constructing a storm water retention basin and prairie wetland, and restoring natural hydrology. In 2010, these partners will restore a natural shoreline at the Refuge Gateway along the Detroit River, cap additional brownfield areas on site, and continue with habitat restoration work. In addition, the Service will in 2010 be constructing the perimeter greenway trail at Humbug Marsh Unit along North Gibraltar Road and Jefferson Avenue, linking Lake Erie Metro Park and residents of Gibraltar and Brownstown with the Refuge Gateway and Humbug Marsh Unit. Simultaneously with that construction work, the Capital Campaign will be raising money for the school ship boat dock and a world-class fishing pier at the Refuge Gateway.

As you can see we will be very busy. On top of that we will continue to pursue through partnerships, as time permits, habitat restorations like recently completed at the Brancheau Unit, soft shoreline engineering projects, fish habitat projects like the reefs off Fighting Island and at BASF Riverview, and growing the Refuge in Canada. Woven through all of this important conservation work will be efforts to improve visitor services, environmental education, and interpretation. However, we won't be able to do this work without the help of our volunteers and partners. We must continue to grow our volunteer base and our partnerships to continue to grow our refuge and reach our common goal of teaching the next generation of conservationists. Thank you so much for all you have done to grow and support our Refuge. Please contact the Refuge staff for additional opportunities to get involved and support the important work of building North America's only International Wildlife Refuge.



John H. Hartig  
Refuge Manager

## HUMBUG GETS INTERNATIONAL TRIBUTE

On World Wetlands Day, Feb. 2nd, Humbug Marsh was designated Michigan's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention at an assembly held in Gibraltar Carlson High School. The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. It provides a framework for international protection of wetlands. Countries that sign the treaty demonstrate their commitment to the conservation and wise use of wetlands as a contribution toward sustainable development throughout the world. Just think, in ten years Humbug Marsh has gone from threatened ecosystem to become part of the International Wildlife Refuge and now receive international tribute and honor as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Congratulations to all!



## An Update on the Refuge Gateway: Monguagon Daylighting Complete!

Becca Robinson, DRIWR

Have you seen the Refuge Gateway lately? Much has changed over the past 6 months on this 44-acre property in Trenton, Michigan! Transformation of the former industrial site, once an automotive brake and paint plant, to a world-class center for environmental education is underway and dramatic differences can already be seen.

In October, over ninety volunteers, including students from Madonna University, Eastern Michigan University, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University, gathered for three planting workshops where 30 large native trees and over 200 native shrubs were planted at the Refuge Gateway.

On December 2, the completion of the Monguagon Daylighting project was celebrated with Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, along with over 100 community members and high-school students. The new stormwater pond and wetland filters stormwater from the Monguagon storm drain, treating urban runoff from the watershed before it enters the Detroit River, while providing valuable wildlife habitat.



Photos: Nicole Nagy

## The Refuge Volunteer Program

Volunteers are the backbone of many organizations as they selflessly share their time, skill and passion and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is no exception. Volunteers serve on the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board, lead walks, remove invasive species, and assist with refuge events. Let us know your unique skills and interests and find out how you can get involved by contacting Kristi Thiel at 734 692-7649 or [kristi\\_thiel@fws.gov](mailto:kristi_thiel@fws.gov).

## Getting a handle on Phragmites Australis in the Refuge

Kristi Judd, Eastern Michigan University

Invasive species are a major threat to the ecological integrity of ecosystems worldwide, and billions of dollars have been spent on their control. Because wetlands are well known for their ability to provide a number of important ecosystem services, they may be particularly sensitive to invasions. Some of these critical services include the ability to absorb storm-flow, provide habitat for wildlife, filter pollutants from runoff, and support biodiversity. *Phragmites australis*, or the common reed, is one of the latest invaders into the Great Lakes Region, and its spread is cause for concern, because it has the potential to alter these coastal wetland ecosystem services in a number of ways.

*Phragmites australis* is native to North America, but its recent spread is the result of the introduction of a European genotype, which is much more aggressive than the native variety. Because it grows fast and is quite large (up to 15 feet tall), *Phragmites* displaces native plants and alters wetland hydrology and nutrient cycling. The dense canopy and duff layer reduces light availability and temperature and the germination of native species. To keep *Phragmites* populations in check, managers apply herbicide to invaded areas, followed by burning to remove the thick duff layer. This management approach is being tested in selected sites such as two refuge units, Humbug Marsh and Brancheau and Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment's Point Mouillee State Game area.

A group of researchers from Eastern Michigan University have coordinated with the Refuge and State Game Area managers to determine the extent of invasion, track its progress, and monitor the effectiveness of the control efforts. Through the use of GIS and state-of-the-art Remote Sensing technology, they will determine the extent of invasion throughout the Refuge, recreate its arrival, and track changes. They are also conducting field experiments to investigate the effects of *Phragmites* on wetland ecosystems and monitor the changes that occur after *Phragmites* control by measuring a number of ecological indicators, such as water quality parameters and biodiversity. Taken together, the study should provide insight into the effects of *Phragmites* on coastal ecosystems and the effectiveness of control measures.



Photo: Elizabeth Czarapata

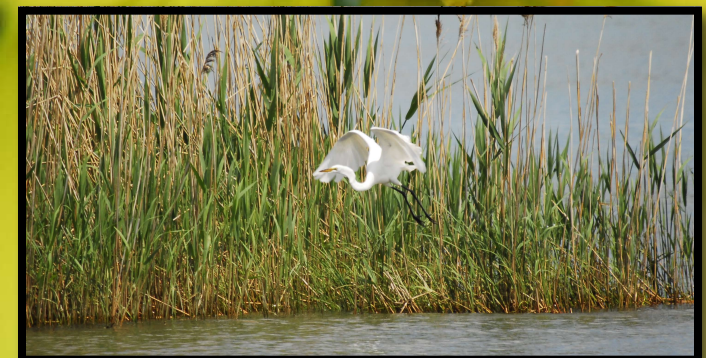
Photo: Steven J. Baskauf, Bioimages

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Photos: Michael Sisinger