

THE WILDSIDE

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

WINTER 2012



Photo: David Howell

IN THIS ISSUE: Big Changes for the Refuge Gateway! • Refuge Bike & Hike! • Extreme Makeover: Brownfield Edition! ...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, fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver and facebook.com/DetroitRiverIWR for more periodic updates.

IWR Email: iwr_alliance@yahoo.com
IWR Office: 734.692.7671

FWS Email: jamie.lanier@fws.gov
FWS Office: 734.692.7649

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Staff

Dr. John Hartig, Refuge Manager
Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager
Jamie Lanier, Visitor Services Manager
Greg Norwood, Biologist
Anna Cook, Biological Technician
Allison Krueger, Landscape Designer

IWRA 2012 Board of Directors:

Richard G. Micka
Chair

Ryan Werder
Vice Chair, Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Tim Bowman
Treasurer, Monroe Bank & Trust

Jack Liang
Secretary, Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority

Fred DeLisle
Liaison, BASF Corporation

Mary Bohling
Michigan Sea Grant

David Shefferly
Ducks Unlimited

Anita Twardesky
Riverside Kayak Connection

Dick Whitwam
Pte. Mouillee Waterfowl Festival

Joann Van Aken
Office Manager

Blue Goose Sponsor

BASF Foundation

Eagle Sponsors

DTE Energy Foundation
ITC Holdings
ERB Family Foundation

Message from the Alliance Chair:

Happy New Year! The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been funded by Congress for 2012 with \$300 million to clean up toxic pollution, restore wildlife habitat, stop invasive species and reduce polluted run-off from farms and cities. All of our work in the last decade for the Refuge has paid off. Thank you for your support!



Richard Micka, Chair

International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board

IWRA is sad to announce the passing of Dr. Bruce Jones, a founding member of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance. Bruce remained an active Board member, a key leader and driving force behind the effort to save Humbug Marsh from development and getting it incorporated into the refuge. His dedication to conservation, environmental education for children, and developing youth to become our next generation of conservation stewards will long be remembered.

A newly created **Environmental Education Fund** in Dr. Jones' honor will provide funding to assist with one of Bruce's life-long endeavors, getting children outdoors. Contributions in memory of Dr. Jones' life may be made to International Wildlife Refuge Alliance – Environmental Education Fund, 9311 Groh Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138 or through the website www.iwralliance.org and click on DONATE.

"Dr. Bruce Jones was an inspiration to those of us who served on the Alliance Board with him", says Dick Micka, IWRA Chairman. "He was always cheerful and had a bright smile for all of us. Children and education were foremost in all his deliberations when it came to preserving our natural heritage. "Dick", he would say, "We need a 30 hour day!" Then, without hesitation, he said, "We need to talk, how about having a cup of coffee soon?" and, we did ...many times. He will be missed."



From the Refuge Manager...

John H. Hartig
Refuge Manager



America's Great Outdoors

In 2010, President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda. America's Great Outdoors builds on our nation's long history of actions taken to conserve our natural heritage. America's Great Outdoors also takes as its premise that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people.

In 2011, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and many senior Interior officials held 50 meetings with Governors and other state stakeholders to solicit ideas on how to best implement the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in each state. U.S. Department of the Interior then prepared a 50-state report outlining two locally-supported outdoor projects per state. Again, each project is designed to protect special places and increase access to outdoor spaces. Each project identified in the report represents what states believe are among the best investments in the nation to support a healthy, active population, and create travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation jobs across the country. More information on this report is available at: <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov>

Of particular interest to all of us is that both Michigan projects identified in the 50-state report are focused on the Detroit River:

- The first project will connect parks throughout the riparian corridor by trails, improve public access to the Detroit River, and re-establish water-based recreation in the area; and
- The second project will engage youth from underserved communities to help with waterfront and river restoration work.

Plans are now being developed to implement these two Detroit River projects. More information will be available in the near future. However, it is certain that this will result in a number of local conservation projects and will be a great opportunity to showcase our regional work.

-John Hartig, Refuge Manager

Background Photo: J. Van Aken



Refuge Bike & Hike: Celebrating a Greenway Trail Linking Humbug Marsh to Lake Erie Metropark

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge celebrated the opening of a newly completed greenway trail connecting Humbug Marsh and Lake Erie Metropark on Saturday, October 15 with a family-friendly bike and hike event. The Refuge Bike and Hike offered visitors the opportunity to ride or hike along the new recreational trail stopping in Humbug Marsh for a number of festivities for visitors of all ages.

Free bike inspections courtesy of REI were available, guided interpretive hikes, crafts, and the appearance by Puddles the Blue Goose, mascot of the National Wildlife Refuge System, highlighted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuges Week.

Its completion links two significant natural resource and outdoor recreational assets – the 410 acre Humbug Marsh and the 1,607 acre Lake Erie Metropark. This greenway trail is part of a much larger greenway network being developed for the region through the Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative. This new section has become part of the 50 miles of continuous greenway trail in Downriver. More information on the Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative can be found at: <http://www.downrivergreenways.org/>.



Photos: J. Pagano

Extreme Makeover: Brownfield Edition

Much like the television program called “Extreme Makeover” that showcases efforts to renovate houses and makeover people to achieve remarkable results, the Refuge Gateway is undergoing an extreme makeover for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. To celebrate the dramatic improvements to the Refuge Gateway and announce confirmed funding for 2012, Refuge partners joined together for a press conference at Carlson High School in Gibraltar on November 7th.

Work completed in fall 2011 included the removal of human-placed fill and debris to restore over three acres of riparian coastal habitat and the construction of a second access road and a kayak landing. Over \$1.3 million has been approved for the project in 2012 from the Environmental Protection Agency, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Forest Service. This funding will complete all restoration work called for in the Refuge Gateway Master Plan.

The press conference was a great success with over 60 partners and media representatives present. Also present were Congressman John Dingell, U.S. EPA Region V Administrator Susan Hedman, and Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano.



Susan Hedman • Photo: J. Van Aken

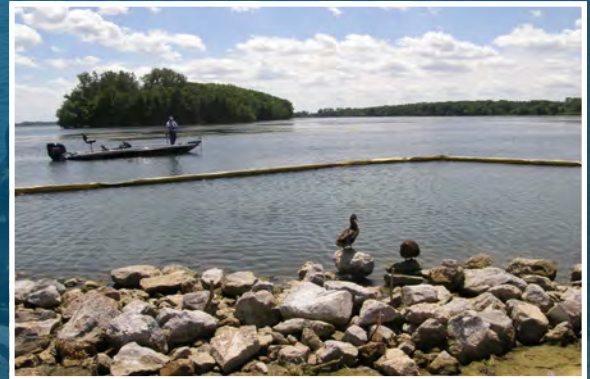


Photo: Allison Krueger



Photo: Rodney Laura



Photo: J. Van Aken

Big Changes for the Refuge Gateway!

Although some of us tend to stay indoors during these cold winter months, this is not the case for our restoration crew at the Refuge Gateway! With the recent grant awards, totaling over \$1.3 million (!), our crews will be actively working across the landscape of the Gateway this winter.

We plan to mobilize our crews in December, so expect to see trucks and bulldozers carefully building topography across the Refuge Gateway landscape throughout the winter. This work is important to lay the foundation for native plantings scheduled for spring.

Did you know this project will create a net gain in available habitat? In total, it will restore over 25 acres of upland forest and 16 acres of wetland habitat! Funding will also support the purchase of hundreds of large trees to be planted by volunteers in 2012. The Refuge staff will be working to organize a number of tree planting events next year - please keep an eye out for announcements, we hope you will join us!



Photo: J. Jourdan

Stewardship

Stewardship of the Refuge includes a wide variety of activities from trail and infrastructure maintenance to restoration of the Refuge's ecosystems. Treatment of invasive species, such as *Phragmites*, has been a stewardship priority with volunteers and contractors, especially at the Humbug Marsh Unit where most *Phragmites* and 60 acres of shrubs have been treated in the last few years. What are we hoping to achieve? This is a great question because Great Lakes coastal marsh habitat is inherently dynamic. Invasive species are not the only stress on an existing assemblage of native fish and animals. As water levels change, so do plant communities and their associated biota. Why not let the ecosystem change naturally?

The biota in our wetlands have not co-evolved with invasive species such as *Phragmites* and the resulting ecosystem is simplified, with a reduction in many species' populations and local extinction of some. One demonstrative example is the metallic wood boring beetle in the Genus *Taphrocerus*, which live in and consume the leaves of native river bulrush and other wetland grasses and are not known to use *Phragmites*. The beetle larvae are host to parasitoids, such as wasp and fly larvae. A healthy population of these insects is the foundational layer for creating a complex food web in our wetlands that involves fish, amphibians, reptiles, and larger insects that are food for soras, bitterns, and waterfowl. Some interactions like this still occur in *Phragmites* dominated marshes, but evidence suggests there are fewer. Furthermore, black and Forster's terns, marsh wrens, common moorhen, and American bitterns are all in serious decline in North America because loss of cattail, rush, and sedge habitat from *Phragmites* invasion.

-Greg Norwood, FWS Biologist

Detroit River-Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Area

The member organizations of the Detroit River-Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Area are focusing on prevention, early detection, inventory, and removal of non-native invasive plants in Wayne, Monroe and parts of Lenawee counties. The Nature Conservancy was awarded over \$600,000 from a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in 2011 to utilize the new cooperative to treat *Phragmites* at locations such as Lake Erie Metropark, Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Erie Marsh Preserve, Erie State Game Area, and on some private land along the western basin of Lake Erie. Public meetings to describe the grant and answer questions will be held at the Westfield Center in Trenton, MI on March 6th from 6-8PM and at the Erie Township Hall in Erie, MI on April 18th from 6-8pm. Please join us to hear more. Contact Greg Norwood, FWS Biologist, with questions at 734-692-7611.



This Volunteer is Going for Gold!

Gabrielle Herin, a student at Trenton High School, has volunteered at the Refuge since the fall of 2009. She has accumulated over 300 hours helping the FWS staff with conservation projects including invasive species removal, tree planting and trail maintenance; and has worked at public events such as the Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival, Hawkfest at the Lake Erie Metro Park and eagle tours at the Monroe DTE Energy Plant. Gabrielle is volunteering at the refuge to satisfy the 400 hour public service requirement for the national Congressional Award. The award has bronze, silver and gold medal levels and requires additional goals to be reached in physical fitness, personal development and exploration. Gabrielle has recently earned her silver medal. Gabrielle has always loved animals, nature (especially birds!) and enjoys her experience at the refuge. She plans to pursue a career in the sciences and is considering biology or environmental science.

2012 Volunteer Workshop

Are you interested in getting more involved at the Refuge? Become a volunteer!

In December, Detroit River IWR celebrated its 10th birthday, a milestone that deserves special recognition. What better way to commemorate the occasion than to rejuvenate the Refuge volunteer program? 2012 will host a number of new activities, programs and events for DRIWR visitors, school groups and partners. We're excited to provide more access and recreational opportunities to our visitors, but we need YOU to help make our plans a reality.

DRIWR has numerous volunteer opportunities available for people of all ages to work in visitor services, environmental education, biology, habitat restoration, maintenance, office administration, and more. A meeting will be held at the Westfield Activities Center in Trenton on February 8, 2012 from 6pm to 8pm for anyone interested in volunteering for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the nation's only international wildlife refuge.

Contact Jamie Lanier, Visitor Services Manager, at 734-692-7649 or at detroitriverrefuge@gmail.com for more information.



Photo: J. Van Aken



Photo: D. Micka



Photo: J. Van Aken



Photo: D. Micka



Photo: J. Van Aken

Background Photo: Greg Norwood

UPCOMING EVENTS

Updated program information can be found at www.iwralliance.org or www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver

HAPPY 2012!

Grab your friends & family and head to the Refuge for a visit! New Year is a time to revive, refresh and renew. While this is especially relevant to our daily lives, it has also become the unofficial slogan for the public use program at the Detroit River IWR.

DRIWR's most recent recruit and Visitor Services program manager, Jamie Lanier, will be working closely with the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance to unveil a slew of new recreational activities, programs and events for visitors during the 2012 calendar year. From speaker series, to family-friendly interpretive programming, and guided recreation programs both on land and water, during the day and at night, the opportunity for YOU to get more involved at your local national wildlife refuge will be hard to resist.

A new calendar of activities and events has been developed to highlight these new and rejuvenated programs. Watch for regular updates regarding these and other Refuge happenings at the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance website: www.iwralliance.org. Additional questions may be directed to detroitriverrefuge@gmail.com or to Jamie Lanier at 734-692-7649.

STEWARDSHIP DATES

COMMON TERN SITE PREP DATES - WITH BIOLOGIST GREG NORWOOD

SATURDAY, MARCH 17 • BELLE ISLE • 10AM-1PM

SATURDAY, MARCH 24 • ELIZABETH PARK • 10AM-1PM

THURSDAY, MARCH 29 • ELIZABETH PARK • 2PM-5PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 5 • BELLE ISLE (IF NEEDED) • 2PM-5PM

GARLIC MUSTARD PULL DATES

THURSDAY, APRIL 26 • HUMBUG MARSH • 3PM-6PM

OPEN HOUSES

SUNDAY, APRIL 22 • HUMBUG MARSH • 1PM-4PM

EVENTS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28 • REFUGE EAGLE TOUR, DTE MPP, REGISTRATION REQUIRED

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 • WORLD WETLANDS DAY, GIBRALTAR CARLSON HS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 • SHIVER ON THE RIVER FRIENDS OF THE DETROIT RIVER

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8 • VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP, WESTFIELD CENTER, TRENTON • 6PM-8PM

TUESDAY, MARCH 6 • COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PUBLIC FORUM, WESTFIELD CENTER, TRENTON • 6PM-8PM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18 • COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PUBLIC FORUM, ERIE TOWNSHIP HALL, ERIE • 6PM-8PM

SATURDAY, MAY 5 • IWRA ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER, BASF FIGHTING ISLAND



Photo: J. Van Aken

International Wildlife Refuge Alliance 7th Annual Benefit Dinner

Saturday, May 5, 2012 – returning to historic, BASF Fighting Island! An evening that will begin with a boat ride to the island in Canada with live entertainment, live and silent auctions, dinner and presentation of the **John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Awards** in recognition of leadership and dedication to the conservation on the Detroit River and the western basin of Lake Erie. Overnight accommodations will once again be offered. Watch the website for upcoming announcements for registration to begin early 2012.

DID YOU KNOW?

Have you wandered outdoors lately, perhaps taken a walk in the fresh fallen snow expecting to see a white winter blanket, but to your surprise your eyes draw you to the base of a tree speckled with what, dirt? How could this be?

Perhaps, it is not dirt at all but rather the *Huypogastrura nivicol*, more commonly known as the **Snow Fleas**. These tiny soil animals, officially called springtails, are not fleas at all. Rather, they are insects that have an uncanny ability to jump with a tail-like appendage (called a furcula) that unfolds to launch them great distances. Hence the term fleas, and being most noticed on snow, Snow Fleas.

Unlike your pet fleas, these are not parasites; they feed on decaying organic matter in the soil, a key in natural decomposition. Only one-sixteenth of inch in size, they often go unnoticed on a warm summer day. But, in winter can be visible on the white backdrop of snow often giving the appearance of 'moving dirt'.



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

US Postage
PAID
Nonprofit
Organization
Permit #153
Wyandotte, MI