

Friends Forward



Fall 2012

National Wildlife Refuge System
www.fws.gov/refuges



From the Chief

The People We Need to Reach



Jim Kurth

Wildlife recreation seemingly is hot. Consider some of the findings of the *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation State Overview Report*:

- Hunters, anglers and wildlife watchers spent \$145 billion last year on gear, trips and other purchases such as licenses, tags and land leasing or ownership.
- Participation increased in 28 states since the last survey in 2006; 38 percent of all Americans 16 and older participated in wildlife recreation in 2011. Vermont has the highest percentage of residents who watch wildlife at an impressive 53 percent.
- Recreational fishing increased by 11 percent, while hunting was up 9 percent. Spending on hunting equipment was up 29 percent from 2006.

The statistics appear to say that Americans are gung-ho for wildlife recreation. And they are – but not as many Americans as we would hope.

I'm impressed that 38 percent of Americans are connecting with nature. But that's not a majority of grown-up Americans.

Continued on page 6



Ryan Hagerty

Because ongoing recovery efforts encompass a broad landscape, the black-footed ferret has been identified as a possible surrogate species representing the prairie ecosystem.

Surrogate Species: Conservation Choices That Work

Faced with the enormous challenges posed by climate change, habitat fragmentation, water shortages and population growth, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife has embarked on a bold approach to wildlife conservation: the identification of surrogate species in defined geographic areas.

By planning for surrogate species – which represent other species or aspects of the environment – the

Service can better ensure that wildlife populations will be healthy and at self-sustaining levels for generations to come.

In announcing draft guidance on how to select surrogate species, Service Director Dan Ashe noted, “Our ability to realize and sustain the mission of the Service has never been tested more than now.” Indeed, the sheer number of species with which the Service, states and other partners

Continued on page 6

Happy 30th Anniversary

Three of the oldest refuge Friends organizations are celebrating 30 years of work – Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Friends of Arthur M. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (FL), and the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society (FL).

Friends of the Minnesota Valley began as an effort to establish the refuge and now supports the entire Minnesota River watershed. Executive director Lori Nelson believes key accomplishments are Community Clean-ups for Water Quality and leading opposition to construction of a nearly 20,000-seat amphitheater next to the refuge. “We are tenacious and committed,” says Nelson, explaining the group’s longevity.

Steve Horowitz, **Friends of Loxahatchee** president, agrees: “The single most important thing is the dedication of members.” There is also an ongoing commitment to “improving the experience of every visitor,” according to one grant application. “Friends of Loxahatchee has 300 dues-paying members, with 25 members Horowitz considers



Charles C. Slavens/Loxahatchee Refuge, FL

Three refuge Friends organizations have been laboring for conservation for 30 years: Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Friends of Loxahatchee and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society.

super-active and about 100 who can be counted upon for single events.

The “**Ding**” **Darling Wildlife Society** started when 11,000 visitors came to the new visitor center during its first month – and the refuge staff turned to volunteers for

help. A trusting and collaborative partnership with the refuge is still the number one strategy for keeping a Friends group strong and active, says executive director Birgie Vertesch. 🦅

Three New Refuges and Counting

Three new national wildlife refuges have been established since the last issue of *Friends Forward*, bringing the total to 560 units in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

- The **Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area** in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, for which conservationist and banker Louis Bacon donated a 77,000 acre perpetual conservation easement on his ranch.
- The **Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge** in Albuquerque, NM, is the first urban refuge in the

southwest and the site of a former dairy and hay farm. The name, which means Valley of Gold, was selected following a social media campaign.

- The **Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area**, NM, located in the Great Plains and the Southern Rocky Mountains, is on land donated by Eugene and Clare Thaw, who envisioned restoring the land as a representative piece of southwestern ecological heritage. 🦅

Survey Confirms: Friends, Volunteers Are Critical

The *Conserving the Future* Community Partnerships implementation team's survey results confirmed what many in the Refuge System already felt: Refuge Friends are essential partners in conserving America's natural resources.

Among the findings from the nearly 100 responses to the survey:

- 89 percent of refuge managers thought a Friends organization was either critical or could help in achieving refuge goals and objectives.
- 99 percent used volunteers, while 57 percent had at least one community partnership.
- 61 percent rated individual and group volunteers as having a broad spectrum of activity in support of refuge programs and as being very effective.

When asked to identify the top challenges facing Friends organizations, respondents most often selected: too few active board members; board members facing burnout; too few active and engaged members; difficulty finding new board members; and a small total number of members.

The overwhelming challenge for refuges is the time it takes to manage Friends, volunteers and community partnerships. Refuge managers reported that they lack enough staff to take advantage of the opportunities offered by these groups and individuals. At the same time, lack of staff or time to train



Friends of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, IL, bike the refuge's back roads. It's a free event for Friends; others pay \$10, which includes a Friends membership. Sixteen new members this year!

and supervise volunteers is the biggest challenge for those who have volunteer programs.

Volunteers and the Web

The Community Partnerships team is working to tackle at least one of those issues by developing a Web application that would help refuges better manage volunteer programs.

All agencies of the Department of the Interior use a single Web site to recruit new volunteers, but it is limited in being able to help manage volunteers. So, refuges have created their own procedures for selecting and training volunteers, including tracking their donated hours.

Instead, the team is seeking to develop an online system that would both improve the volunteer experience – making sure, for example, that volunteer hours are properly recorded – and cut refuges' management workload.

At the same time, the team is seeking to improve the current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web page for volunteers – www.fws.gov/volunteers/ – to make it far more user friendly.

“Volunteers, Friends and partners are the most valuable allies of the Refuge System,” said Kristen Gilbert, youth, partnerships and grants coordinator for the Alaska region and a member of the Community Partnerships team. “They are active and motivated people whose work is vital to fulfilling our mission.”

“Each year we rely on about 40,000 volunteers,” she continued. “If we didn't have the work of volunteers, we would need nearly 800 more full-time employees to do mission critical work. That's reason enough to make sure we are serving our volunteers and Friends as well as we can.”

For more information about *Conserving the Future*, go to: <http://americaswildlife.org/>. 

History on Your Refuge

Are you working on or planning a project that will involve your refuge's history? Send stories about interviews/oral history, workshops, interpretation of historic resources to Eugene_Marino@fws.gov.



from friend to friend

*share your
success
stories*

MINNESOTA

The question of funding educational programs lurked for months, maybe years, before the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center created an endowment in 2010 for a long-term solution. The first contribution came from the Grady Mann family in 2010; Mann opened the first wetlands office in Fergus Falls, MN, in 1954.

The goal is to raise \$1 million in 10 years. At the two-year mark, the endowment has about \$110,000.

“The contribution is a wonderful example of how individuals can make a difference in the lives of so many,” said former Friends president Dave Sanderson, who still leads the five-member endowment committee.

The West Central Initiative, a regional community foundation which administers the endowment, provided training and strategic advice. “People are uncomfortable asking for money,” says Sanderson, “so we practiced how to do interviews.” One effective strategy is flexible giving, which allows donors to designate a portion of their

contribution to the endowment and a portion to projects they like. One such project is the Yellow Bus Fund to transport school children to the Learning Center. Donors may make a one-time contribution or give a smaller amount each year.

The Friends also created the Monarch Society to accept bequests. “We’ll go back to the people who contributed initially,” says Sanderson, “and ask them to include us in their estate planning.”

“We’ll be lean for 10 years,” says Matthew Conner, director of the Learning Center, which is connected to the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. Then Conner expects the fund to begin covering the costs of as many as four nine-month interns to help serve the 8,000 youngsters who come to the center every year.

LOUISIANA

Four new trails for canoes and kayaks were dedicated this fall at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge. The neighboring **Friends of Black Bayou** helped visitors learn how to take advantage of them.

The trails are an America’s Great Outdoors project coordinated by the Louisiana State University AgCenter. The Walton Family Foundation gave a \$235,000 grant, which enabled designation of easily accessible put-in and take-out spots, development of brochures and paddling workshops.

Friends of Black Bayou, known for its interest in canoeing and eagerness to volunteer with community groups, readily agreed to coordinate four paddling workshops on Black Bayou Lake. “Any time we cooperate with other agencies, it always ends up helping us,” says Friends vice president Ann Smith. The LSU AgCenter and a



Students show off invasive white clover they pulled at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, MN.

Russ Aguilier

local paddling outfitter publicized the workshops, which also publicized the refuge.

Besides, added Smith, “this is something we believe in. It will get more people out on the lake, it will let people know that we rent canoes and bring people to the refuge.”

Dora Ann Hatch, the LSU AgCenter agritourism coordinator, believes the paddling trails will also demonstrate to landowners that they can use their land to support paddlers who want to camp, hike or hunt. “We’re thrilled about the opportunities to generate ecotourism in the region.”



Ed Lindsey

Old Town High School teacher Ed Lindsey will speak about dragonflies on December 15 at the Sunkhaze Café, organized by the Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, ME.



LSU AgCenter

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge manager Kelly Purkey paddles a new trail through the cypress.

MAINE

Welcome to the Sunkhaze Café: Discovering Nature’s Wonders over Coffee. On the third Saturday of the month, the Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge invites anyone interested in nature and wildlife to have coffee at the Daybreak Bakery in Old Town, not far from the refuge. Ten to 15 people show up to hear talks about invasive species, marsh birds, Atlantic salmon and even the impact of a new transportation corridor through the community.

“Not only are the topics interesting, but the public is learning more about how they can help conserve native species,” says Friends member Eleanor D’Urso. “In a relaxed atmosphere, natural resource professionals and scientists share the work and research they are passionate about.”

D’Urso recommends advertising early and often when initiating such projects. Friends post flyers and take advantage of free advertising space in the community newspaper. They are also reaching beyond the immediate area to Bangor, about 15 miles away. 🦋

NEW RESOURCES AT RECREATION.GOV

Are you looking for day hikes or bird festivals? Bygone mining towns or the largest national wildlife refuge in the lower 48? You’ll find them all on the newly designed *Recreation.gov* Web site. The interagency site guides visitors to 90,000 national parks, national wildlife refuges, forests, waterways, and national recreation areas—all searchable by location or type of activity. It’s also possible to explore trip ideas, discover new destinations and make reservations. (Oh, that largest refuge? It’s the 1.6-million-acre Desert National Wildlife Refuge, 25 miles north of Las Vegas!) 🦋

From the Chief—Continued from page 1

So, how do we make the percentage hit the 50-plus mark? Are we dreaming to think that 60 percent – even 70 percent – of Americans might become wildlife enthusiasts?

Conserving the Future talks about the challenge. It calls for building relationships with people who have not had traditional links to wild lands and wildlife. It recognizes that there are myriad opportunities to expand wildlife-dependent recreation on refuges.

How can we, for example, work with local communities to facilitate transportation so seniors and people with disabilities – even people who live

in cities and depend on mass transit – can easily get to wildlife refuges and wildlife recreation? We are working to break down language barriers, but are we doing it quickly and broadly enough? Are we developing enough programs for young people – and are the programs being announced in the media that those under 25 use every day?

Ultimately promoting the relevance of the Refuge System to the lives of Americans is, at least partially, an issue of access to wildlife recreation.

The Refuge System is the front porch of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – the place where Americans meet our people

in uniform and see firsthand the work we do. Getting more people to enjoy wildlife recreation on refuges is not only the work and goal of the *Conserving the Future* Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation implementation team, but it is also the work of everyone who believes a connection to the natural world is the route to caring about its future

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation is not just a gauge of how many Americans spend time and money in the outdoors. It is an insight into how many people we still need to reach. 

Surrogate Species: Conservation Choices that Work—Continued from page 1

are concerned makes it impossible to conserve landscape-scale habitats on a species-by-species basis.

The Service's draft guidance outlines how to select surrogate species, including criteria for defining biological goals. Each of the Service's eight regions is now holding discussions with employees as well as conservation partners, state fish and wildlife agencies and others on the draft guidance. Ultimately, Fish and Wildlife Service regional directors are responsible for identifying surrogate species in their regions. The Service expects conservation targets to be defined and identified for each region by late 2013-early 2014.

The surrogate species approach works directly with the Service's drive for Strategic Habitat Conservation, which seeks to link the actions of its programs and partners so their combined effect can achieve conservation outcomes at a larger scale. In this way, conservation actions can help recover and sustain species populations.

The theory and practice of using surrogate species in conservation

planning are documented in scientific literature. To ensure that the Service is using the best available science, it will submit final, draft guidance to independent experts for scientific peer review.

For wildlife refuges, the surrogate species approach is intended to help refuge managers focus on a set of relevant priorities that can be monitored to see if biological goals are being met.

"In many ways, national wildlife refuges have worked with the concept of surrogate species for a long time," said Jeff Rupert, Refuge System Headquarters chief of the Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning. "When Pelican Island became the first wildlife refuge in 1903, it was established to protect the brown pelican. In fact, the brown pelican served as a surrogate for the benefit of lots of water birds that nest there – like egrets, herons, ibis and wood storks.

"Identifying surrogate species will mean our conservation actions will have a better chance of real landscape-level results.

We've employed the surrogate species concept as the Refuge System worked on comprehensive conservation plans, which set biological goals and objectives. As refuge managers, we've seen that some species will work better as surrogates than others. Those are the discussions that are taking place across the country," said Rupert, who was refuge manager at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma before coming to the Refuge System Headquarters.

If species on a particular refuge, including migratory birds, have unique habitat requirements or management needs that cannot be met using a surrogate species approach, their needs will be incorporated individually into landscape conservation strategies or addressed by stand-alone strategies. The Service will be collaborating with states and other partners to accommodate as many species as possible and target conservation efforts where they will have the greatest benefit. 

Q&A send us your questions

How Do You Tell Your Story to the Media?

- Know your local media: daily and weekly newspapers, radio and TV, Internet and blogs, wire services.
 - In this digital age, don't discount radio. With the approval of your refuge manager, contact a local radio station to suggest a regular monthly program hosted by the manager or other refuge staff.
 - Your local public access cable television station might consider interviewing the refuge manager or Friends president.
 - List your events on newspaper, television Web sites as well as Internet sites such as *Patch.com*.
- Know what makes a good story.
 - People. (Who is doing something groundbreaking, fascinating or just unusual?)
 - Relating to what's in the news. (How is the drought or sea level rise affecting wildlife on the refuge?)
 - Something that is surprising, counterintuitive, one-of-a-kind
 - An urgent or unexpected threat. (Are volunteers needed to protect sea turtle nests suddenly exposed by a higher-than-usual tide?)
 - Contests, festivals, seasonal special events
- Know how to write a good press release.
 - Answer the key questions succinctly: who, what, when, where, why.
 - Include a date and contact information. Follow up with a phone call and leave specifics in your message.
 - Don't depend exclusively on press releases – follow Twitter and Facebook pages of interested reporters and publications so that you can comment about your refuge or Friends group when it's appropriate.
- Target your stories.
 - Consider news, features, leisure and lifestyle, travel, op-ed/letters to the editor.
 - Regularly update your media contact lists.
 - Build a relationship with individual reporters.
- Know the message you want to convey.
 - Identify no more than three key take-away ideas.
 - Keep your talking points short. Radio-TV sound bites are 5-20 seconds.
 - Avoid bureaucratic lingo or acronyms.
 - Create good photo opportunities to illustrate your message. 🦋

The Book Shelf



Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World by Laurie Lawlor, illustrated by Laura

Beingessner, is timed for this year's 50th anniversary of that book – *Silent Spring*. It offers a peek at Carson's childhood and the myriad challenges she faced as a woman scientist with a wildly unpopular idea, including finishing the book while she battled cancer: "I could never again listen happily to a thrush song if I had not done all I could."

Take Pride, Friends of St. Croix WMD

“It is a joy to be an outreach extension of the Fish and Wildlife Service to our community,” said Clarence Malick about the 2012 Take Pride National Volunteer Award given to Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District, WI. In fact, it is because of the Friends outreach that the young organization is as vibrant as it is.

Two years ago, 50 people came to the refuge when Friends grant writer Greg Scheder initially organized his Cub Scout pack to clear invasive plants. This year, there were 500 parents, Scouts, educators and

partners for Conservation Day on the WPA (Waterfowl Production Area).

The Friends have also produced a full-color birding guide to the WMD's auto tour route, brought middle and high school students to the refuge to plant native prairie flowers and grasses, and partnered with at least 20 community agencies and conservation organizations in the past two years alone.

What does Scheder recommend for other Friends groups? “Look at the strategic plan for your refuge. What organizations can you draw on to support your group? Develop ongoing strategic partnerships.” 🦋



STANDARD PRESORT
POSTAGE AND FEES
PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR
PERMIT G-77

Friends Forward

USFWS-NWRS
4401 North Fairfax Dr.
Room 634C
Arlington, VA 22203-1610
www.fws.gov/refuges

Do You Know the Largest Flying Bird in North America?



The California condor’s wingspan can stretch to nine feet – and all nine feet are displayed in the vinyl banner delivered to refuges in anticipation of Refuge Week. The banner shows the silhouetted wingspans of a condor, bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel and hummingbird. It is perfect for festivals, birding events and environmental education programs year round. Children (and adults) are able to compare their own wingspans to those on the banner.

This year’s Refuge Week Toolkit – delivered to refuges just after Labor Day – includes a fact sheet about each of the birds on the banner. So, did you know the hummingbird nest is the size of a walnut and held together with spider webs? 🦋

Friends Forward

Address editorial inquiries about this issue to:

Karen Leggett
USFWS-NWRS
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 632
Arlington, VA 22203
703-358-2375
Karen_Leggett@fws.gov

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks.



Scanning this QR code with your smart phone will take you to www.fws.gov/refuges.

Follow the National Wildlife Refuge System

Twitter [@USFWSRefuges](https://twitter.com/USFWSRefuges)
Facebook www.facebook.com/usfwsrefuges
www.fws.gov/refuges

