

2001 Volunteer Report

Volunteers conserve and interpret fish and wildlife and their habitat for present and future generations





A Special Message from the Director

Dear Volunteers,

Another year has passed; 2001 was a hard year for many of us — chaotic events, our nation plunged into war, a feeling that our planet had taken a slight shudder in its spin and that nothing would be the same again. For all that, or, because of all that, volunteers continued to put native plants in the ground at our refuges, put fish back in our waters at hatcheries and fisheries offices, and continued to care. Perhaps respect for the smallest things grows into an appreciation for all things and our volunteers know this.

In Fiscal Year 2001, over 36,000 volunteers gave their time, talents, and skills to help conserve the natural heritage of America, donating more than 1.4 million hours of service to keep our wild lands and wildlife healthy. Through these hours of endless support, trails were constructed, rivers were cleaned, children were educated, wildlife received habitat, and America secured a future. Because someone cared... You.

With deepest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Williams". The signature is fluid and elegant, written in dark ink.

Steve Williams

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Key

AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
NFH	National Fish Hatchery
NWFR	National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
NWRS	National Wildlife Refuge System
SCA	Student Conservation Association
USFWS	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Volunteers Make It Happen

In a world where bad news appears to be more common than good, it is heartening to tell a story of optimism and hope. This annual Volunteer Report tells such a story, a story of more than 36,000 volunteers across the country who continue to give of themselves in their commitment to conservation, and dedicated to the belief that individual efforts can and do make a difference. Within this report you will meet some of our volunteers, witness their accomplishments, and come to understand our deep appreciation of their work.

What Gives Us the Authority to Accept Volunteer Services?

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-j), as amended by the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 7421) and the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-242) authorize us to accept volunteer services.

In an effort to fulfill our mission of...“working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people,” we recognize the importance of volunteers. From the

field to the lab, at a refuge or fish hatchery, in all programs and at all levels, volunteers are vital to this conservation effort. Without volunteers, promoting a better understanding of the natural world through education would be all but impossible. Volunteers take the face of wildlife to the public and give it new meaning through their efforts and passion.

For more information, visit our website at www.fws.gov or write to: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Headquarters, National Wildlife Refuge System, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 670, Arlington, VA 22203.



Art Barnett volunteers as a “Preparator” in the Morphology Section of the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, OR. What does he do? He prepares mammal specimens for the Lab’s standards collection.

The Volunteer Legacy

It was the early 1900's and the world found itself consumed with the dawn of the 20th century. Hats adorned with feathers were all the rage and the fashion industry was hot to get them. A seemingly innocuous endeavor harboring dreadful consequences, plume hunters scoured the countryside to supply this demand, slaughtering millions of birds in their quest.

Along a stretch of the Indian River, near Sebastian, Florida lay small Pelican Island, even then the last breeding ground for brown pelicans along the entire east coast of Florida. Local resident Paul Kroegel lived in a nearby lagoon and witnessed the slaughter of thousands of pelicans and other wading birds for this fashion

accessory. Horrified by what he saw, Paul Kroegel stepped in to protect the island and its wildlife, patrolling the island in his free time, and alerting others of the damage being done.

One man cared. Kroegel took his affection for the land and birds to President Theodore Roosevelt who established Pelican Island as the first Federal Bird Reservation in 1903, today recognized as the first National Wildlife Refuge in a system now made up of over 500 refuges. And what about Paul Kroegel? America's first wildlife volunteer eventually became the nation's first Refuge Manager.

Volunteers find their place of refuge, and leave a legacy there.



Paul Kroegel on Pelican Island

USFWS

2001 Program Highlights

- Volunteers contributed more than 1.4 million hours of service in FY 2001 which equates to an estimated value of \$16.5 million!
- With only minimal increases in the number of volunteers in FY 2001, the USFWS volunteer program still managed a 9.7% increase in the number of hours donated from the previous year.
- In FY 2001, volunteers accomplished 22% of work completed in the NWRs. Their contributions to the USFWS equate to 701 full-time employees.
- Nine Refuge Support (Friends) Groups joined the NWRs in Fiscal Year 2001, increasing the total to 218.

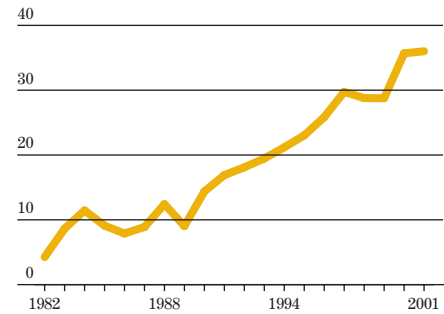
Growth of the Volunteer Program

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Number of Volunteers</i>	<i>Hours Donated</i>	<i>Dollar Value</i>
1982	4,251	128,440	\$854,000
1983	8,638	479,319	\$3,187,000
1984	11,447	527,150	\$3,632,000
1985	9,103	441,820	\$3,532,000
1986	7,892	386,934	\$3,094,000
1987	8,891	383,983	\$3,157,000
1988	12,416	478,568	\$3,871,000
1989	9,036	575,695	\$4,427,095
1990	14,382	713,441	\$5,593,377
1991	16,895	768,820	\$6,273,571
1992	18,103	968,401	\$8,231,409
1993	19,460	993,681	\$8,734,447
1994	21,186	880,999*	\$8,069,951
1995	23,034	909,072	\$8,590,729
1996	25,840	1,108,208	\$10,860,439
1997	29,734	1,335,738	\$13,090,232
1998	28,780	1,505,222	\$14,841,489
1999	28,757	1,277,207	\$13,078,599
2000	35,684	1,332,875	\$14,021,845
2001	36,006	1,462,599	\$16,556,621

*In FY 1994 Region 8 Volunteer Program transferred from FWS to National Biological Survey.

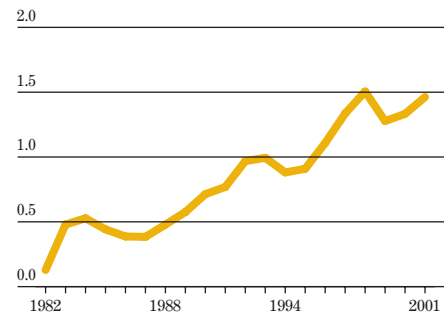
Number of Volunteers

In Thousands



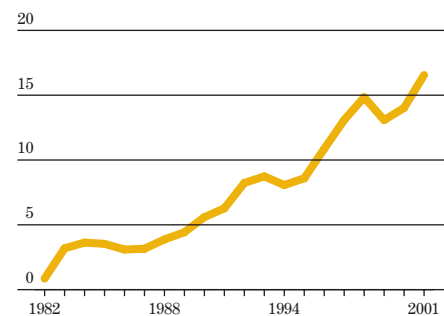
Hours Donated

In Millions



Dollar Value

In Millions



What Is the Volunteer Program?

Volunteers can be found in all the corners of the country, at many wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, in wetland management districts and ecological services offices. What do they do? Some help keep visitor centers open, some teach environmental education to tomorrow's leaders, some keep boat landings clean, and others help with biological surveys. They fill a niche by doing what they do best. Each one is a different piece of the puzzle, each one indispensable to the bigger picture.

In late October, when the winds shift to a northwesterly direction, and a cold bite is felt in the air, folks in Minnesota and Wisconsin know winter is approaching. And so do the tundra swans. Heading south as lakes and rivers ice up further north, the swans finally arrive at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge



Tonia Burton, Northeast Fishery Center (PA) holding a 6-year old sturgeon, studies the effectiveness of various anesthetics across a range of water temperatures for Atlantic sturgeons.

(MN) to the delight of thousands of visitors. Greeting these visitors are the volunteers of the Alma Swan Watch, a group of more than 100 strong, who educate the public about the swans from the viewing deck of the Rieck's Lake Observation Platform during October and November. Leading

this intrepid band is the group's coordinators, *Harry and Katie Buck*, who oversee the scheduling of the volunteers on the deck, insuring someone is always at hand to help the public discover the joy of watching birds in flight and at rest. With countless volunteer hours and more than enough dedication to spare, the Bucks also developed and maintain a web site and answer hundreds of phone calls about the tundra swan migration. Harry is also the "voice" of the Rieck's Lake Radio, a recorded message that informs the public about the refuge, the tundra swans, and the 100,000 other waterfowl heading south. Rain or shine, someone will always be available to talk about swans, and you can thank the Bucks for that.



Harry Buck teaching "Ducks on a Stick," a popular presentation illustrating techniques for identifying common waterfowl.

Who Are Our Volunteers?

Who are our volunteers? You may pass them on the street everyday. Quietly and tirelessly going about the business of conserving America's wildlife, curious about nature and passionate to save it, these volunteers are committed to a conservation ideal that transcends age or ethnicity, time or place. Each one brings some particular skill, some hidden talent, some little spark that ignites a flame of generosity and optimism. So, how do you know them? They're the ones with the future in their eyes.

Jeffrey Everett, Benton Lake NWR (MT) cared enough to give more than 5,000 hours of his time over the



Jeffrey Everett



Restoring alewives on the Concord River.

last 2.5 years. He wants to do whatever it takes to protect our wilder places, performing a variety of duties ranging from refuge maintenance and clerical duties, to biological surveys and monitoring. Jeffrey is shown here carefully holding a Burrowing Owl, part of a research study he conducted on both refuge and state lands throughout north central Montana.

A little boy with a little load of herring helps restore alewives on the Concord River in Massachusetts. This boy holds the future in his hands. He was one of the 40 volunteers who helped Laconia

Office of Fishery Assistance (NH) transfer 5,590 alewives from the Nemasket River in southeastern Massachusetts to the Concord River. We don't know his name, but we know his face. He is one of many unsung volunteers across America.

One of the ties that bind this family is the land they live on, strengthened as together they assemble palmetto brooms for the annual Okefenokee Festival. Bernice Roddenberry works alongside her daughters and grandchildren in preparation for this event, demonstrating the multi-generational nature of our volunteers, and providing an example in community spirit and family leadership we can all learn from.

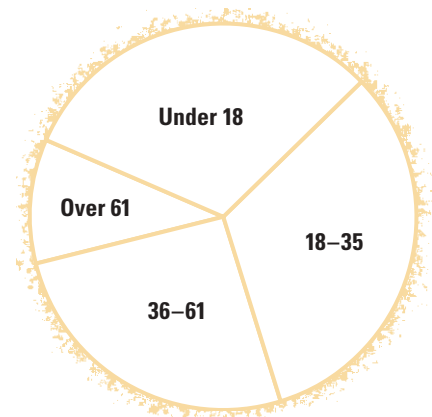


Bernice Roddenberry with her daughters and grandchildren.

Age Range of Volunteers

Region	Under 18	18-35	36-61	Over 61	Total
1	1,323	2,096	1,956	627	6,002
2	3,023	3,434	936	410	7,803
3	3,278	1,534	1,577	485	6,874
4	645	1,401	1,622	1,019	4,687
5	1,906	1,882	2,236	913	6,937
6	1,019	1,164	857	272	3,312
7	28	123	104	11	266
HQ	0	1	2	2	5
NCTC	4	72	37	7	120
Totals	11,226	11,707	9,327	3,746	36,006

Age Range of Volunteers

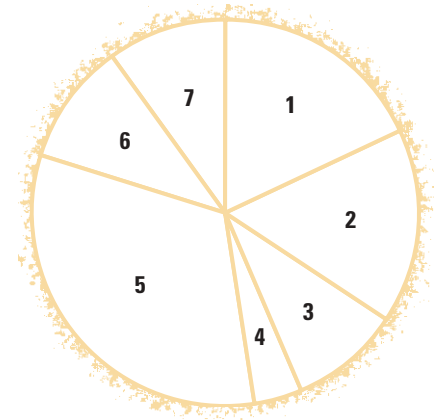


Volunteer Program Values

Volunteer Program Operating Costs

Region	Operations Costs	Staff Hours
1	\$399,747	18,052
2	\$355,593	9,640
3	\$209,904	26,924
4	\$91,562	45,367
5	\$708,795	16,783
6	\$225,356	9,975
7	\$216,526	4,791
HQ		40
NCTC	\$1,000	40
Totals	\$2,208,483	131,612

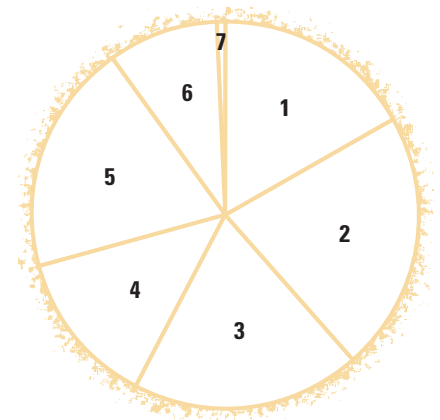
Volunteer Program Operating Costs By Region



Volunteer Hours/Value

Region	Volunteers	Hours	Value*
1	6,002	261,561	\$2,960,871
2	7,803	316,236	\$3,579,792
3	6,874	186,700	\$2,113,444
4	4,687	265,731	\$3,008,075
5	6,937	237,157	\$2,684,617
6	3,312	129,769	\$1,468,985
7**	266	60,620	\$686,218
HQ	5	465	\$5,264
NCTC	120	4,360	\$49,355
Totals	36,006	1,462,599	\$16,556,621

Number of Volunteers By Region



*Value is derived using the U.S. Office of Personnel Management 2001 General Pay Schedule of a GS 5-1.

**Historically, Alaska (Region 7) has the fewest number of volunteers. However, these volunteers work long hours to accomplish their goals within the short, demanding summer season.

Special Programs

Student Conservation Association (SCA)

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has partnered with the Student Conservation Association for 20 years, and providing students an opportunity to volunteer in their field of study while gaining valuable work experience. SCA provides full-time volunteers, highly motivated and enthusiastic students who give to their stations as much as they take away. In 2001, SCA recruited, placed, and supported 74 Service volunteers and interns across the country through four programs: the Resource Assistant Program, the Conservation Associate Program, the Conservation Work Crew Program, and the Conservation Internship Program.

Resource Assistant Program
SCA Resource Assistants are college-age volunteers placed in positions, many of them earning college credit for their volunteer service, making it a very popular program. These volunteers generally spend three months at a location working under the supervision of a professional in their field of study. Forty-four Resource Assistants spent time conducting surveys, investigative studies and censuses, developing and conducting environmental education programs, providing visitor services, and much more.

Conservation Associate Program
Students interested in long-term volunteer service often choose this program, averaging 6-12 months in duration, and allowing participants to see a culmination of their efforts on specific projects. Established in 1996, the SCA Conservation Associates Program sponsored 30 students at various Service locations in 2001.

Conservation Work Crew Program
The Conservation Work Crew Program consist of 6-10 students who are teamed with an experienced SCA crew leader. These crews tackle specific conservation projects, such as trail or bridge construction, or site restoration and revegetation. In 2001, one such crew picked up where last year's crew left off, building new trail in the Kenai NWR in Alaska.

Conservation Internship Program
Paid, seasonal conservation internships are available to minorities and women in college through the Diversity Internship Program. This program exposes students to the variety of career options and choices within the field of conservation.

For more information about the Student Conservation Association, please contact:
Wallas Elton, Director
Resource Assistant Program
The Student Conservation Association
P.O. Box 550
Charlestown, NH 03603
603/543 1700

American Association of Retired Persons Volunteer Talent Bank

A wealth of experience and knowledge lie within the Volunteer Talent Bank, a national volunteer referral service managed by the AARP. Interested members of AARP and others aged 50 and over can register with the Talent Bank. Potential volunteers are matched with opportunities within their geographic location, skill level, interests, and time commitment. These volunteers provide an incomparable resource, as they come with a lifetime of experience and the willingness to share it.

For more information about the Talent Bank, or to see if there is a potential volunteer for your needs, contact:

Cynthia Langley
AARP Volunteer Talent Bank
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
202/434 3211

Partnerships and Support Groups

Support Groups

Citizens have a vital link to the community and have been supportive of the USFWS for many years. Today, their involvement and participation in conservation is one of our most important partnerships. Support Groups (often referred to as "Friends") are citizens partnering with their local refuge, fish hatchery or other Service site through the establishment of nonprofit organizations. Members work to build community support for their refuge or hatchery, as well as encourage public involvement in site-related activities. In 1996, there were 70 support groups working in partnership with NWRS. By the end of 2001, 218 Friends groups

flourished nationwide, demonstrating that Americans are concerned about their national wildlife refuges.

Support groups need support too, and the USFWS has pledged its support and empowerment to our many Friends. The agency provides opportunities for training, a mentor program, and a grant program in cooperation with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The NWRS co-sponsored the first-ever Friends Conference February 23-24, 2002, in cooperation with the National Wildlife Refuge Association. This was such a success that the second Friends Conference is scheduled for January 31-February 3, 2003.

Audubon Refuge Keepers (ARK)

The National Audubon Society launched an initiative in 1996 to encourage community appreciation and help build community foundations of support for refuges nationwide. Local support groups, called Audubon Refuge Keepers (ARK) are involved in all aspects of refuge enhancement, from habitat restoration to environmental education.

Cooperating Associations

During Fiscal Year 2001, 61 Cooperating Associations provided support to 84 field stations, compared to 38 Cooperating Associations supporting 60 field stations in Fiscal Year 1998.

Partnerships and Support Group Highlights

The first ever *National Refuge Friends Conference* took place at the Wyndham Washington D.C. Hotel in February, 2002. 250 people attended to represent the 218 Friends groups nationwide, with discussions ranging from advocacy and fund-raising, to environmental education and Centennial planning. In a letter and videotaped address to the group from Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, volunteers were thanked for their commitment to conservation, and pledged support and empowerment as partners in this great effort.

Friends of Necedah NWR received a \$25,000 grant from Wild Birds Unlimited through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to build a blind for their famous cranes. They matched the grant funds with labor, materials and funds raised through donations, providing the refuge the resources it would otherwise do without.

Who didn't help at Eastern Neck NWR (MD) in the establishment of the Bay Scapes Demonstration Garden? *Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.*, along with Washington College, funded an intern to design the garden. The refuge utilized a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, counted on their core group of volunteers and recruited others from Outward Bound, Washington College's Into the Streets Program, and the Kent County Parks and Recreation Leaders Club to get the job done.

Five days, 11 acres, 400 volunteers and 100,000 plants was what it took to restore a marsh at Martin NWR (MD) which included help from The Baltimore National Aquarium, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and *Friends of Blackwater*.



Cooperating associations are nonprofit partner corporations which receive authorization to create revenue on public lands. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1996, and the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, as amended, outline this approval.

For over 35 years, cooperating associations have been helping us achieve our conservation mission by creating, producing, and selling educational and interpretive material to the public. These educational materials help the visitor understand the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the area, while at the same time supporting the mission of the Service. These associations fund many projects and programs, returning money generated from these sales directly to respective stations.

Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (C.A.R.E.)

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, or C.A.R.E., formed in 1996 to raise the profile of the NWRS. Consisting of 20 diverse conservation and environmental groups, this coalition recognizes that the NWRS must have the operational and maintenance capabilities to allow it to meet its “wildlife first” mission. Guidelines within C.A.R.E. restrict its activities and discussions to issues of operational and maintenance funding only, believing other issues (such as NWRS policy and land acquisition) have a better chance at success if the NWRS has adequate funding.



Participants in the National Refuge Friends Conference gather on the Capitol steps.

C.A.R.E. Members

American Birding Association
American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
Assateague Coastal Trust
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Izaak Walton League of America
National Audubon Society
National Rifle Association of America
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Safari Club International
The Wildlife Society
The Wilderness Society
Trout Unlimited
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Legislative Fund of America
Wildlife Management Institute

National Public Lands Day 2001

National Public Lands Day is a program of the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF) in partnership with multiple federal agencies, state, and local governments and private partners. This was the eighth year of the program which is designed as a “work day,” enlisting volunteers to spend a day giving back to the resource through project work, and, at the same time heightening awareness of the value of our public lands.

In Fiscal Year 2001, 15 USFWS sites coordinated projects that involved more than 500 volunteers contributing 2,350 hours. Thanks to our coordinators, support groups, and volunteers for making a difference and participating in stewardship of America's natural places.

Recognition of Outstanding Volunteers

Volunteer of the Year Award

For her patient and careful cultivation of a native grass garden and butterfly garden, her weekend welcome to refuge visitors, and her overhaul of a recycling project that turned into a comprehensive “greening program,” *Melissa Owen* was presented the Volunteer of the Year Award by the National Wildlife Refuge Association. Melissa has logged more than 6,000 hours at the Buenos Aires NWR (AZ) over the past 6 years, a desert grassland of diversity and scope in the middle of nowhere, and yet facing all the challenges of a 21st century world. Ask Melissa why she volunteers and she will tell you it’s the place and the people. Passionate and committed to both and a defender to the end, Melissa Owen is like the ocotillo she shares the Sonoran Desert- give her a little water and watch her bloom.

Support Group of the Year Award

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society proudly accepted the Refuge Friends Group of the Year Award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The society provides funding and volunteer labor to both Pea Island and Alligator River NWRs on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Founded in 1985, this group has been instrumental in purchasing equipment and publications for the refuge, as well as funding the refuges’ volunteer programs. The society operates a book store in the Pea Island Refuge Visitor Center, generating \$160,000 in revenue annually, and has contributed half a million dollars worth of labor and materials toward building a visitor center, wildlife overlooks, and viewing towers.



Shown from left to right: George Hoffmann (President, Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges), Buff Bohlen (Chairman, NWRA), Melissa Owen (Volunteer of the Year), Craig Manson (Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Marshall Jones (Deputy Director, USFWS), Tom White (President, Coastal Wildlife Society NC- Alligator River NWR), John Berry (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation).

Recognition of Outstanding Volunteers

Outstanding Volunteer Profiles

Pete Fisher received a Friend of the USFWS Award and the Regional Director's Honor Award for 10,000 hours of service to both Okefenokee and Reelfoot NWRs (FL). Pete worked closely with the AmeriCorps crew, organizing and completing desperately needed maintenance projects at Okefenokee. The result of his attention to detail is the transformation of "tired" buildings to renewed and improved facilities.

John Kelly was presented with his 10,000 hour pin at Balcones Canyonlands NWR (TX) during National Public Lands Day activities. John prepares news releases, writes a column for the local paper, conducts bird surveys and tours. He works with the Friends group, as well as the ARK program (Travis Audubon Society). John was the first volunteer for Balcones in 1992, when he assisted staff identify two endangered neotropical migrants.

Stan and Ann Marie Rapp give more than John Heinz NWR at Tinicum (PA) could ever hope for. Volunteering at the Refuge for the past 10 years, this couple helped get the Friends of the Heinz Refuge off the ground, and currently serve as board members. When the Cusano Environmental Education Center opened in 2001, it was the Rapps who took charge of managing the Tinicum Treasures Bookstore — from scratch. Selecting and ordering merchandise, pricing and keeping track of inventory, training, and scheduling a team of volunteers to run the place. By the end of the reporting year, more than \$18,000 in total receipts were taken in. All of it going back to the refuge to support environmental education, which, by the way, the Rapps are also heavily involved in.

Long time volunteer *Herald "Fuzzy" Furse* spends approximately 200 hours a year helping Santee NWR (SC) with waterfowl management programs, habitat improvement, surveys, banding, and general maintenance. Fuzzy's no slouch, he's been doing this for over 20 years.

Wilson Cady, local birding expert, has volunteered at Steigerwald Lake NWR (WA) for the past 6 years, recording the first sightings of numerous species, both on the refuge and in the area. Firsts on the refuge include juvenile eared grebes (breeding) and sanderlings, as well as the first juvenile yellow-headed blackbird sighting in over 20 years.

Ken and Connie Clineman top the list of quality volunteers drawn to St. Marks NWR (FL), especially in Visitor Services, Outreach and Education programs. First, they were selected as St. Marks NWR Volunteers of the Year for all their efforts in this field. They then earned nominations for the NWRA Volunteers of the Year Award, and were finalists for the Tallahassee Democrat's Volunteer Educators of the Year Award.

Mac McGrory, retired General Electric Computer Specialist, is putting his skills to work for National Elk Refuge (WY). Volunteering at the refuge for the past seven years, and donating 4,400 hours, Mac provides invaluable computer support keeping the machines up and running and the blood pressures down.

Volunteers' Conservation Achievements

Wildlife

Luke Decicco, a fourteen year-old volunteer at Yukon Flats NWR (AK) discovered a nesting Wilson's phalarope during a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survival) banding session. This is the first breeding record for that species on the refuge.

Volunteers *Glenn Akins and Jerry Beale*, Ridgefield NWR (WA), studied the egg masses of red-legged frogs and long-toed salamanders, slogging through wetland after wetland in their search. This information will be used to evaluate the effects of water level management on these amphibians, and may help explain where the salamanders have gone.

Habitat

Volunteers at Imperial NWR (AZ) helped plant over 14,000 cottonwood, willow, and mesquite trees as part of the refuge's habitat restoration effort.

Twenty-nine volunteer groups traveled to Hakalau Forest NWR (HI) to participate in the reforestation effort. Volunteers collected seeds, cared for the tree nursery, and planted trees. The result: 23,077 native and endangered trees and shrubs in the ground.

While we often hear about wildfires, we rarely hear about what happens to wildlife afterwards. Volunteers investigated the effect of fire at Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain NWR (WA), by completing a bird survey after a large fire to determine the impact of the blaze on resident bird populations. A dozer line created from this fire was rehabilitated, while the black was re-seeded with native plants.

People

Dave Chafin, volunteer with the Savannah Coastal Refuges (GA), proved invaluable to the refuges' outreach program, reaching more than 500 young people at Boy Scout and youth programs. Dave also launched several public events, including a reptile educational program presented at local shopping malls.

Eighty-four year old *Bertha Sorenson*, a 10-year volunteer veteran at D.C. Booth Historic NFH (SD) continues to provide service to both the refuge and the public. Bertha helps operate the gift store, provides visitor information, and keeps the fish biting through the sale of fish food.

Mammoth Spring NFH (AR) staff received an extra hand with some maintenance projects from a local organization for the mentally challenged. Through the project, participants learned new skills in landscaping and public aquarium maintenance while providing assistance to the refuge.

Volunteers at Oxbow NWR (MA) worked with inner city school children in Worcester, both on the refuge and in the classrooms as part of the Urban Education Program. From the experience, we learned the answer to the question: how do you get a kid to care? The answer: Give them a reason why.

Facilities

Betty and Clarence Ellsworth, winter volunteers at Seedskaelee NWR (WY), donated more than 1,180 hours during their three month stay. Through Clarence's master cabinet-maker skills, this refuge received a new work station and storage cabinets, display case, and solutions to stubborn doors. Meanwhile, Betty organized five years worth of wildlife and habitat survey data, inputting

them into the computer system. Not a couple to lounge, they also monitored and repaired 90 miles of refuge fence. Full-time volunteers, this couple worked eight to ten hour days during the week, and on most weekends, they could be found conducting waterfowl and swan surveys.

Volunteers at Florida Panther NWR (FL) got down and dirty clearing 1.5 miles of a proposed interpretive trail. This difficult work included removing large rocks and tree roots and meant over 650 hours of labor. These volunteers are not all brawn; these multi-faceted volunteers also organized refuge outreach programs, environmental education activities, open houses and special events.

Dale Sides, Big Oaks NWR (IN) contributed over 450 hours during 2001, replacing a crucial plank bridge closed after an engineering inspection. Dale calculated the materials needed and provided much of the labor. In fact, Dale's involvement accounted for at least half of the total hours of this project.

Innovative Approaches

How Fish Can Help Turn Lives Around

The Norfolk National Fish Hatchery (VA) participates with the 14th Judicial District Juvenile Services as a community service program site. In this program, juvenile offenders transition to young volunteers as they work to turn their lives around. Hard working and anxious to please, these volunteers help the hatchery by providing much needed basic maintenance; raking leaves, cleaning restrooms, washing and waxing vehicles. A win-win situation for everyone, the hatchery gets the help it needs, while the young people learn responsibility and good work ethics.

Christmas Trees and the Gift of Space

For many, volunteering means giving of themselves, in time or talent. But to one private landowner in North Carolina, volunteering meant the use of his land as a habitat laboratory for restoring an old Christmas tree farm to native grassland. The idea was to provide habitat for declining numbers of neo-tropical migratory birds. Biologists from the Asheville Field Office (NC) took advantage of this unique opportunity, trying several different management prescriptions to see which worked best, utilizing the ability to rapidly change strategies as species response became apparent.

Let the Fish Do the Talking

When the Uvalde NFH (TX) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Universidad Juarez Autonoma de Tabasca, five Mexican student volunteers took advantage of the opportunity to complete their theses in aqua culture while gaining experience they can apply across the border. Students assisted with fish production, including endangered species recovery, public outreach and grounds maintenance. While at the hatchery, these students wrote a Spanish language manual on the intensive cultivation of catfish and bass.



Volunteers at Eastern Neck NWR (MD) work on completing the Bayview-Butterfly Trail.

Challenges and Concerns

Every year volunteers help accomplish our mission goals that may otherwise be unmet. Likewise, every year the challenges the volunteer program faces remain essentially the same. Many stations' volunteer programs are understaffed and underfunded. In an effort to improve the program nationwide, field stations are asked to provide input. Listed here are some frequent recommendations from field stations.

- Increase funding to support volunteer programs (housing, supplies, equipment, training, stipends, awards and vehicles).
- Continue to establish Volunteer Coordinator positions to better utilize growing volunteer programs.
- Standardize award structures throughout the NWRS to establish consistency in our appreciation of volunteer efforts.



Nothing but net. Four volunteers at Madison WMD (SD) collected over 800,000 leafy spurge beetles to control the invasive plant. Beetles were distributed on refuge and private lands, and in areas where spraying was difficult.

Our Future

Volunteering for wildlife began almost 100 years ago, and from this service was borne an entire system of national wildlife refuges. To this day, volunteers continue to serve for exactly the same reason, concern for nature and passion to protect it. Imagine what the future holds — multiply one man's commitment to pelicans by 36,000 helping hands, and nature just may have a fighting chance. The future of the volunteer program depends on our commitment and investment in every single volunteer who walks through the door. With the NWRS Centennial just around the corner, volunteers and partners will be more important than ever. They will take us into our next century, and pelicans everywhere will breathe a sigh of relief.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Regional Contacts

Within the 93 million acres of wildlife habitat that the USFWS manages are almost that many volunteer opportunities. At national wildlife refuges, fish facilities, ecological services offices, and numerous other offices from Hawaii to Maine, and Alaska to Puerto Rico, volunteers are needed for biological and archaeological inventories, outdoor recreation planning, maintenance of habitats and facilities, natural resource planning, clerical assistance, environmental education, and public outreach. For complete details, contact the Volunteer Coordinator at the office nearest you.

Region 1: CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, WA

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911 N.E. 11th Avenue
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Portland, OR 97232-4181
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Region 2: AZ, NM, OK, TX

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P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248 6635

Region 3: IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 Federal Dr., Federal Building
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Region 4: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, PR

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300 Westgate Center Drive
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Region 6: CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY

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