

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGE

McGregor District  
McGregor, Iowa

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

FY2000




Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge,  
McGregor District

McGregor, Iowa  
Fiscal Year 2000

  
District Manager                      Date      3/8/02

  
Acting Complex Manager                      Date      3/13/02

  
Refuge Supervisor                      Date      3/28/02

  
Regional Chief, NWRS                      Date      5.15.2003

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Location

The McGregor District is one of four districts comprising the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The District Office is located at McGregor, Iowa with Refuge Headquarters at Winona, Minnesota. This District contains parts of Houston County, Minnesota (8,651 acres); Grant, Crawford, and Vernon Counties, Wisconsin (37,495 acres); Dubuque, Clayton, and Allamakee Counties, Iowa (32,038 acres) for a total of 78,184 acres. The District covers navigation Pools 9, 10 and 11 and is 97 river miles long, extending from Dubuque, Iowa to Genoa, Wisconsin. Adjoining or nearby public land areas are: 1) Grant River Public Use Area, Potosi, Wisconsin; 2) Nelson Dewey State Park, Cassville, Wisconsin; 3) Pikes Peak State Park, McGregor, Iowa; 4) Wyalusing State Park, Wyalusing, Wisconsin; 5) Effigy Mounds National Monument, McGregor, Iowa; 6) Yellow River State Forest, Harpers Ferry, Iowa; 7) Blackhawk Park, Victory, Wisconsin; 8) Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Genoa, Wisconsin; 9) Fish Farm Mounds State Park Preserve, New Albin, Iowa, and several smaller access areas.

### 2. Topography

The Refuge lies within the Mississippi River Valley which is two to five miles wide and cradled between forested bluffs, rising up to 500 feet above the River. The elevation of the valley is approximately 600 feet mean sea level.

### 3. Points of Interest

The McGregor District contains no large cities, but small river towns flank the river. Commercial fishing, clamming, and furbearer trapping provide income for some residents along the Refuge. Sport fishing is the most popular recreational activity, occurring every day of the year. Waterfowl hunters may travel over 200 miles to participate in opening day hunts on the Refuge. As a migration corridor, the Mississippi River valley may be unsurpassed in significance.

### 4. Physical Facilities

The McGregor District Office/Visitor Contact Station (DO/VCS) completed in July, 1986 is located in McGregor, Iowa. Warehouse/storage areas are located at Cassville and Genoa, Wisconsin, and McGregor and Lansing, Iowa.

INTRODUCTION

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## Highlights

Swamp white oak acorns collected from the Refuge to be grown for forest restoration on the District.

Winnebago Creek changes path and plans for Pool Slough project in Pool 9.

Congressman Ron Kind hears about sedimentation on the River from Refuge staff.

Turkey River road realigned.

New Carolina skiff outfitted for law enforcement patrols.

Adams tract in the Turkey River Bottoms officially becomes part of the Refuge.

Illegal dock storage issues addressed on Pool 10.

Sturgeon Slough hiking trail completed in Pool 10.

First annual wildlife film festival held in McGregor.

Bertom Lake boat landing renovation completed.

District staff worked Cabela's spring and fall expo with an estimated 4500 people visiting the fall expo and Refuge booth.

First Refuge intern worked 10 weeks during the summer with 400 hours.

Spring waterfowl survey conducted at the request of the McGregor District due to unusually high numbers of migrants.

## 1. MONITORING AND STUDIES

### 1.a. Surveys and Censuses

Results of the Mid-winter Waterfowl Survey conducted on 12/12/99 were sent to the IDNR. The entire District was surveyed by boat and vehicle. This year's survey contained several unusual concentrations of waterfowl due to the mild winter and lack of ice cover. Some of the notable concentrations were: 37,070 canvasbacks, 1,947 Canada geese, 3,972 swans, and 1,500 coots. A total of 162 adult and 80 immature bald eagles were also observed during the survey.

An informal eagle survey was conducted by ADM Male February 22. The survey covered the only ice free area in Pool 11 roughly two miles north of Cassville to 13 miles south of town. A total of 225 bald eagles were observed along this open water stretch. Several of the historical eagle nest territories were also checked for activity and found to have birds on the nests.

An unseasonably warm spring allowed volunteer Tom Sandersfeld to begin the frog and toad survey route in early April. Spring peepers and leopard frogs were recorded on the first run of the survey. Seven different anuran species were encountered during the three survey periods which ended July 15. A rare Cricket Frog was heard once at the Lansing survey point. Two Cricket frogs were also heard at Potosi Point, Pool 11. Eastern gray tree frogs were the most abundant.

The total number of active GBH Nests for the eight rookeries on the District was 2,011. Butler Lake Rookery had 833 nests. The production count was completed June 19. Two rookeries were abandoned (Lansing Dike and Methodist East).



Twenty five active eagle nests were counted in pool 9, nine in pool 10, and 12 in pool 11. The bald eagle productivity count was finished June 19. A sample of 30 nests was checked. The number of young recorded for the 30 nests was 40. There were 55.2 young produced from the 46 active nests.

The bittern and rail survey started June 7. Intern Peter Zeigler surveyed pools 9 and 10. The total number of responses was: 8 Virginia rails, one American bittern, and two least bitterns. The rail & bittern survey was conducted at seven locations within Pool 11 on June 7, 17, and 22. The only bird encountered during the survey was a least bittern at the Potosi Point Marsh during the first run.

Several staff members as well as a Shadow Student from Prairie Du Chien, assisted Eric Nelson and Lauri Wlosinski, Winona Headquarters, during invertebrate sampling in Pool 9. The District supplied air boat operation for collection of samples.

#### 1.b. Studies and Investigations

The American Ginseng status report was submitted to the Regional Office for the District.

DM Lindell attended a meeting at Winona HQ regarding graduate student Eric Thorson's swan research. Eric discussed status and results of his work to date.

### 2. **HABITAT RESTORATION**

#### 2.a. Wetland Restoration

ADM Male and BT Henkenius met with the Corps and IDNR at Buck Creek in Pool 10 to discuss the updated dredge placement issues.

#### 2.b. Upland Restoration

ROS Loose and BT Henkenius gathered swamp white oak acorns from the river bottoms near Ambro Slough in Pool 10. These acorns will be grown by the Wisconsin State Nursery in Boscobel, Wisconsin for two years before they are transplanted on the flood terraces of the Quality Beverage Tract.

#### 2.c. Deep Water/Riverine Restoration

ROS Loose and Henry, BT Henkenius attended the River Mechanics Workshop in Winona to better understand how the various control structures on the river work as well as the natural processes that influence the river.

#### 2.d. Environmental Management Program

Officials from WDNR and IDNR met with District staff during January to discuss future EMP projects. The meetings were needed in order for the District to set "the Refuge's" values and management goals on the table for the states. Many of the proposed projects do mesh with the Refuge's mission, but some appear to be at the cost of other Refuge resources. Overall the meetings were successful in letting the states know which

projects the Refuge will support when and if they float to the top.

Contacts were made with the I&M Railroad regarding the rail crossing on the Whalen Tract in SE Minnesota. If the proposed Pool Slough EMP project goes through, the Service would like to see this crossing repaired and upgraded. I&M has indicated that they would be willing to do the necessary repairs if we would pay for the cost of the treated lumber (approximately \$3,000). This is a substantial savings. Corps estimates for this upgrade varied between \$15,000 and \$30,000.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Bob Sheets, IDNR Biologist, on March 9<sup>th</sup> at the John Deere Marsh Water Control Unit. Several projects were discussed that would bring water into this marsh. Currently the wetland only receives water through a stoplog structure if river stages are great enough to allow gravity flow into the units. IDNR will submit a project through EMP for this activity.

ADM Male met with officials from the John Deere Plant in Dubuque, Iowa on March 20<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was a result of some poor workmanship that John Deere did on various activities in and around the John Deere Marsh Corps lease. They agreed to remove some unsightly dozer push piles on a dike top that also functions as a walk way for Refuge visitors. They also have agreed to remove some concrete blocks they had dumped in the area previously.

A meeting was held in New Albin, IA on April 3, 2000 to discuss findings of the preliminary soil borings taken for the Pool Slough EMP project study. The preliminary findings indicate a higher seepage rate within the proposed pools on the IA DNR lands than originally estimated. DNR officials expressed their desire to continue with the project despite the findings and indicated that they would be willing to run the pumps more frequently if necessary to compensate for this.

District Manager Lindell, ADM Male and ROS Loose attended a site visit coordinated by Gary Palesh with the Corps of Engineers to discuss the Capoli Slough HREP. This project is focusing on saving what remains of the Capoli Slough island/aquatic plant bed complex which lies along the left descending side of the navigation channel in pool 9 between river miles 656.6 and 658.4. Specific project features were examined as compared to current conditions. Some concerns were raised on the placement of materials for deflection dikes and island placement.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> ADM Male, RM Fisher, and EMP Coordinator Beseke provided a tour of EMP projects within the McGregor District to the new Refuge Supervisor (Area-2), Jon Kauffeld. Two Pool 9 projects were visited (Capoli Slough and Pool 9 Islands).

District staff met with WDNR, IDNR and Corps representatives on site at the Ambro Slough EMP Project. The various project features of this mostly fisheries project were closely scrutinized for their benefits and possible adverse effects on other wildlife resources.

### 3. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

#### 3.a. Water Level Management

On March 7<sup>th</sup> river stages outside the John Deere Water Control Marsh in lower Pool 11 finally reached a level to allow water to gravity flow into the unit. Within days, unit water levels reached 1.50 feet within the unit and continued to rise until March 14<sup>th</sup> when they crested at 1.70. At this stage the vast majority of the 54 acres is covered with at least 6" of water. Unfortunately, with only this much water held in the unit this early it will eventually dry up, unless significant rainfall or a bump in river stages occurs.

The John Deere Marsh water control structure remained closed during most of May to retain unit water levels at 4- 8" (Gage 1.60). On May 31<sup>st</sup> the structure was open to allow higher river stages to flood the unit for late spring/summer operation.

#### 3.b. Moist Soil Management

ADM Male and BT Henkenius started operations of the Guttenberg Moist Soil Units on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Management for invertebrates is the normal practice for spring operation, however, de-watering was initiated this year to allow for a March burn within the units.

An assessment of the sinking support block structure associated with the control structure into Big Pond revealed further damage over the winter. Attempts will be made during March to save the block support by stacking rip-rap under and around the structure.

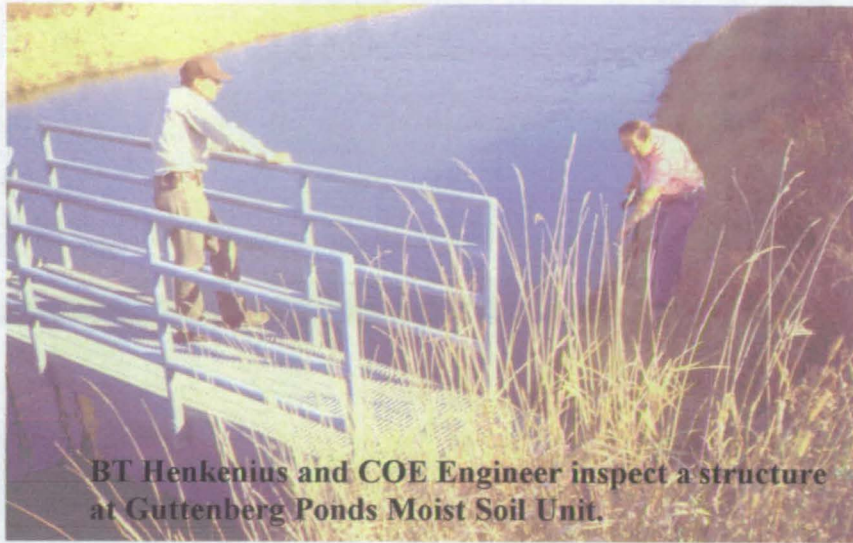
ADM Male presented a program to the Guttenberg Ducks Unlimited Chapter on the operations of the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units. Local members would like to get involved in some of the refuge operations within the units. McGregor staff will investigate any possible projects for the group. Contacts were also made with Regional D.U. representatives for possible projects on the Refuge.

A portion of the Guttenberg Moist Soils Units was staked in preparation for discing to stimulate seed germination and as a test area to apply herbicide for control of river bulrush. Both activities were completed. However, the ponds have been taking on water due to high water levels. The dikes were mowed at Guttenberg Ponds.

A report was received that one of the control structure at Guttenberg ponds was open and possibly broken. ADM Male, DM Lindell and BT Henkenius investigated and discovered that the north water control structure of Big Pond was open. Some one apparently cut the chain to the screw gate and opened the gate. The gate was lowered too far and fell off the gate track. The gate was put back on its track for a temporary repair.

On August 1<sup>st</sup> the Guttenberg Moist Soil Units continued their de-watering. The west unit continued to be plagued with problems with getting the water off due to higher river stages. The east unit was de-watered to the borrow trench. The structures at Guttenberg ponds were

cleaned and water control logs were placed in units, and gates opened to drain ponds.



**BT Henkenius and COE Engineer inspect a structure at Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Unit.**

On November 9<sup>th</sup> ADM Male met with Corps Engineer Erickson from the St. Paul District. Problems within the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units (MSU) south knife valve structure and the surrounding earthen bank was the reason for his visit. After the visit it was evident that any reconstruction or stabilization on the bank was going to be the responsibility of the Refuge. The problem, however, is more of a design problem which would bring it back to the Corps for repairs. As of now we will attempt to apply a band aid solution to the problems given the cost and equipment deployment problems to the island units.

During the week of October 18 - 22 traps were placed at several locations on the Guttenberg Ponds MSU dikes. Damage by burrowing rodents has caused some dike deterioration. Six muskrats were trapped during the effort.

On October 28<sup>th</sup> the flooding of both the east and west units was initiated. By November 4<sup>th</sup> the fine tuning was completed in both cells with water levels ranging from 3" to 15" in the units.

A total of 66,300 duck use days were recorded within the units during November. Canada goose use was not calculated within the units but on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 935 geese were observed within the two units. On December 10<sup>th</sup> substantial ice started to form within the units and by the 15<sup>th</sup> the units were completely frozen over.

ADM Male met with the Regional Engineer & Biologist from Ducks Unlimited on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The meeting focused on a possible partnership between the Service and D.U. to develop the Turkey River Moist Soil Units. Water delivery to the area and cell division were discussed. A site visit to John Deere Marsh was also included. Water delivery and management possibilities at this location were covered. D.U. was excited at the potential at both sites and is actively seeking some involvement with the Service in Iowa on the Mississippi River.

### 3.d. Farming

ROS Loose met with Larry Kapinus of Prairie du Chien to determine his interest in farming the Quality Beverage Tract north of town. He has agreed to give it a try. Under the terms of the proposed agreement he will be allowed to plant corn and harvest 100% of the production for three years. This unit will eventually be planted to bottomland forest species.

The Cooperative Farming Agreements for 2000 were sent to cooperators on April 10. Six units totaling 418 acres will be farmed this year on the Refuge.

On April 25<sup>th</sup> the four co-op units within the Turkey River Bottoms were subdivided for the planting of alfalfa and corn.

### 3.e. Forest Management

A site management plan was prepared for the Quality Beverage Tract, Pool 10. This site will be managed as a floodplain terrace forest. District staff hope to adapt the reforestation techniques (root prune method seedlings) utilized by the Missouri Department of Conservation in NE Missouri on this site.

On July 19<sup>th</sup> ADM Male met with representatives from the BNSF Railroad. Problems with the agricultural crossing at the Patzner Field Forestry Management Unit by the railroad have prevented access to the unit for months. After the meeting the crossing was soon restored. Unfortunately, it was only temporary as the crossing was once again ripped up the first of June. Mowing and other management activities continue within the unit, but the size of equipment is limited.

### 3.f. Fire Management

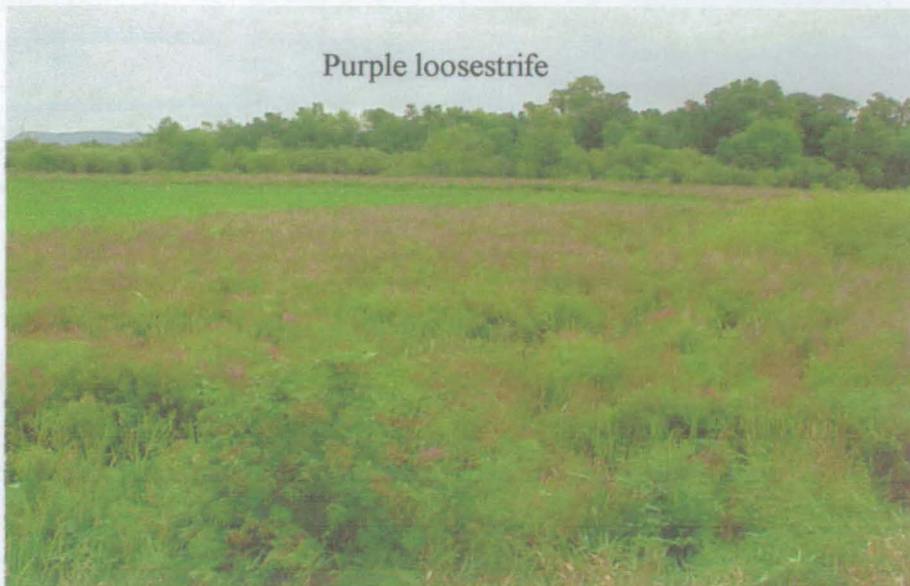
Burn plans for 2000 were completed and sent to Norm Brown, FMO Necedah NWR, for approval. District staff completed the prescription burn within the Guttenberg Ponds Moist Soil Units on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The burn within the cell floors was hampered by wet conditions. However, the burn smoldered outside of the fire line and was declared a wildfire.

### 3.g. Pest Plant Control

The annual weed inventory and pesticide use report were submitted to the RO for the District. Rick Klann from Upper Iowa University released *Hylobius* beetles at his two purple loosestrife research sites at cold springs landing and lock and dam 9 in Wisconsin. He is beginning to see plant stress at these sites from beetle activity.

Summer Intern Peter Ziegler released 500 adult *Hylobius spp.* beetles into purple loosestrife patches along Minnesota Highway 26 just north of the Crooked Creek Bridge. The release sites were photographed and GPS'd for future reference and monitoring.

Purple loosestrife



### 3.h. Other Habitat Management

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with officials from the Dairyland Power Cooperative on 1/4/00. Dairyland Power is in the process of renewing their 50 year right of way lease with the Corps in the Turkey River Bottoms. They would also like to upgrade their equipment/poles in the area. Because of the real possibility of moist soil development under EMP II in the area the Refuge would like the equipment moved. In it's current location the overhead lines would create an unnecessary hazard to birds using the cells. Dairyland has agreed to comply with the Service's request to move the lines. On 1/13/00 BT Henkenius and ADM Male met on site with Dairyland officials and a route was selected that would eliminate this potential hazard.

Information was sent to the Regional Historic Preservation Officer in the RO regarding the proposed realignment of the Turkey River road. Over the last five years the natural erosive forces associated with the Turkey River has cut within 25 feet of the existing road edge. Clayton County has asked the Service to consider another route for the road that would take it away from the immediate threats of the Turkey River.

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, ADM Male met with Earl Wood from the Corps Realty Office at the barge fleeting area just south of the Turkey River Landing. The meeting was requested by the District to address the severe problem of erosion at this site. The barge fleeting area was removed from the Refuge several years ago. The area is now covered by a lease between the Corps and a local barge company. The issue for the Refuge is the fact that the 50 foot strip of land in the original lease has shrunk to as little as 13 feet in some locations. The District would like the Corps to address the erosion problem before the entire buffer strip has eroded. This was not a new problem, and one that had been called to the attention of the Corps previously, but for some reason was not addressed when the permit was renewed for the fleeting area. The Refuge has been ensured that when the permit is renewed again in five years the problem

will be addressed.

District Staff met with representatives from the town of New Albin on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Concerns with the new path of the Winnebago Creek, and it's effects on the sewage treatment lagoon were discussed. Continued efforts to tie the Service to the town's problems have not succeeded. DM Lindell did, however, pledge to assist the town in seeking a solution, if possible through the Corps.

## 5. COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

### 5.a. Interagency Coordination

DM Lindell traveled to Hopkinton, IA and completed a site review of private land along the Maquoketa River to determine use of the area by bald eagles at the request of land owner John Stone. Lindell sent a letter to Mr. Stone confirming bald eagle use of the area.

McGregor District staff met with staff from nearby Effigy Mounds National Monument. Since both stations added new staff members during the past year, we met to introduce new people or get reacquainted.

DM Lindell attended an interagency meeting at the LaCrosse District office regarding public use of dredge spoil areas. Other agencies participating included the Corps of Engineers, Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources.

District staff met with COE land management personnel from their LaCrescent, MN office to discuss Corps private structures and use licensing policy.

ROS Loose attended the COE annual Forestry Meeting held at Bellevue State Park, IA.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Jeff Janvrin and other Wisconsin DNR personnel at Bertom Landing to discuss waterflow control measures for the existing nearby EMP fishery project. Janvrin was concerned that a small back channel may at times deliver higher than desired flows to the EMP project. He wished to approach the contractor currently working for FWS at Bertom landing project about completing EMP remedial work.

DM Lindell attended a Fish and Wildlife Interagency Group meeting in Milan, IL to further discuss planning of Rock Island COE District EMP II projects.

On April 27<sup>th</sup> ADM Male and NRCS staff met with Congressmen Ron Kind (WI) and his aids to discuss the problems of sedimentation on the National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting was part of an effort by NRCS to draw attention to the problems associated with watersheds in Grant County, WI. ADM Male also participated in a round table discussion on current farm practices and their effects on sediment loads in the watersheds.

ROS Loose met with the Iowa DOT, Wisconsin DOT, Bridges "R" Us Painting Co., Inc. and KTA-Tator, Inc for an on site meeting to discuss storage

of equipment which will be used to sandblast and paint the Lansing Bridge (Hwy 9). Permission was given for the contractors to store their materials on the Lansing dredge spoil site next to the Big Slough Landing and to use the parking pad at the entrance to the Winneshiek Slough Landing for temporary storage of their heavy equipment.

DM Lindell attended an interagency Habitat Needs Assessment meeting in LaCrosse. The meeting purpose was to identify future desired conditions for the Upper Mississippi River pools (pool 10 - north) for developing Environmental Management Program, phase II.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Mike Griffin, Iowa DNR to discuss status and plans for the proposed (EMP) Turkey River bottoms moist soil units.

ROS Loose coordinated with the Wisconsin DOT on signs for the new Sturgeon Slough hiking trail between the bridges at Marquette. Loose also coordinated with Minnesota transportation officials about a proposed observation deck along Highway 26 for Pool Slough in Pool 9.

ADM Male updated Ducks Unlimited on the status of the Turkey River bottoms moist soil units.

DM Lindell met with Jeff Janvrin, Wisconsin DNR to discuss long term management planning for navigation Pools 9 and 11.

DM Lindell attended the Corps of Engineers (St. Paul District) forestry issues coordination meeting at LaCrosse.

DM Lindell attended the Interagency Fish and Wildlife Work Group meeting in LaCrosse to discuss Pool planning (vision) documents being prepared for each navigation pool as part of the recently reauthorized Environmental Management Project.

A letter was sent to the Rock Island ES office regarding an expanding erosion cut at Island 189 in Pool 11 to request assistance in working with the Corps to fix the problem which appears to be the result of the Ackerman's Cut project.

A request was sent to the Regional Office for compatibility determination and NEPA review for the realignment of the Turkey River road. A letter was sent to the Clayton County Engineer ensuring them that the Service is taking care of the cultural review and other reviews as required by law.

ROS Loose replied to Bruce ReVair from Waukon regarding our opinion on installing a low level lighting system on the Lansing Bridge. Other than attracting mayflies and possibly bats or birds, the Refuge did not have a concern with the possibility of this lighting.

A request was sent to Catellus Management Corporation for an extension/conversion of the existing permit for the crossing over the BNSF railway at the Bertom boat landing in Pool 11. The request was for a ten year permit to allow periodic maintenance of the landing.

A letter was also sent to I&M Rail Link requesting the railroad crossing at the Whalen tract in Pool 9 be upgraded for continued access to the

site.

ROS Henry attended a meeting with the Iowa DNR and a Harper's Ferry resident who wants to reinforce the bank below her cabin with rock. They are planning to bring the rock in by barge, but Higgin's Eye mussels may be present in the area. In the end, the resident decided to bring the rock in by land and by hand.

DM Lindell, ADM Male, ROS Loose and volunteer Peter Ziegler attended a field trip to Capoli Slough area, Pool 9. This was the initial field visit by the Interagency planning group who will be involved with this proposed EMP project. The meeting included representatives from the Corps of Engineers (Gary Palesh, project leader), States of Wisconsin and Iowa.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Bob Sheets, Iowa DNR Maquoketa, at John Deere marsh, pool 11, to discuss active management alternatives for the area.

Refuge Staff met with Ric Zarwell of the National Audubon Society's Upper Mississippi River Campaign to discuss how our agencies might better cooperate and support each others goals on the Upper Mississippi River. Our first action item will be an exploratory meeting to determine the interest of our river partners in holding an annual river festival with emphasis on the culture, history and natural resources of the Upper Mississippi River.

DM Lindell and ADM Male, in addition to Refuge Manager Fisher met with IDNR Officials in Bellevue, Iowa. Topics included the proposed hunting blind regulation, decoy regulation, Iowa's lack of work on several landings they agreed to maintain on the Refuge, and an overview of the Driftless Area N.W.R. The meeting was an overall success despite no agreement on many of the issues.

DM Lindell attended a River Resources Conservation Team meeting at the Rock Island District, Corps of Engineers offices, Rock Island, IL.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met Bruce Norton and Dan Oles, Corps of Engineers LaCrescent, MN office, and Bob Swartz and John Jackson, Wisconsin Department of Transportation to discuss management plans for the Quality Beverage Tract, north of Prairie du Chien. The meeting was held to discuss planting of trees as a means of reforestation of the area, rather than allowing reforestation via natural succession to proceed.

DM Lindell and ROS Loose conducted a condition inspection of the pool 9 islands EMP structure (the big U) in lower pool 9 with Dennis Erickson, Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District. They noted that central portions of the southern leg of the U have settled so that the top of the rock structure is near pool surface elevation at normal pool level.

DM Lindell and ADM Male attended the Corps of Engineers sponsored Habitat Needs Assessment review/manager input at the E.B. Lyons Nature Center, Dubuque, Iowa.

DM Lindell and ADM Male traveled to the Rock Island (ES) Field Office with Frank Fiorenza, mayor Potosi, WI. They met with Jerry Rasmussen

(FWS), Owen Dutt (COE River Pilot) to discuss status of plans and possible funding for public use developments at Potosi "Pier" area.

DM Lindell and ROS Loose attended the public meeting regarding Pool Slough EMP project at New Albin, IA.

DM Lindell and other McGregor District staff met with Mike Griffin, Iowa DNR to discuss EMP issues and project status.

DM Lindell participated in the Bridgeport, WI area Christmas Bird count, coordinated by the Madison, WI Audubon Society chapter.

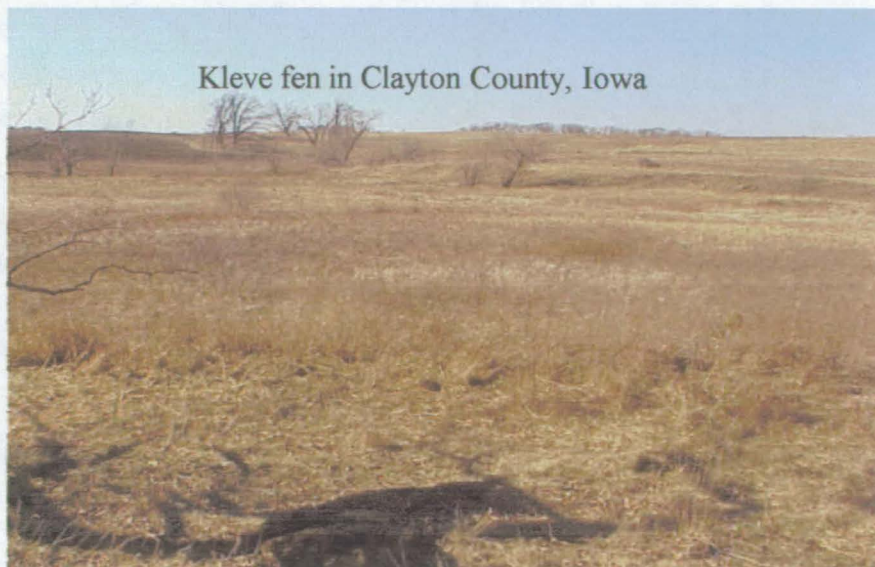
#### 5.b. Private Lands

ROS Loose met with Todd Holman, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Badger Camp, Inc and Mark Mittelstadt, Consulting Forester with the Blue Ox Forest Service to discuss management of the camp property. Several options were proposed for long-term prairie and savanna restoration projects. Upon approval by the Camp's Board we will begin restoring a 10 acre prairie opening during the fall of 2000.

ROS Loose assisted Dave Omernik and Ann Bode with the NRCS in completing a minimal effects determination on a parcel of land owned by Sinsinawa Mounds, Grant County, Wisconsin. The parcel was determined to be not eligible for minimal effects.

ROS Henry attended meetings for the newly formed Upper Iowa River watershed Alliance being coordinated out of the RC&D for Northeast Iowa. Funding was provided to the Lime Creek Fish and Game Club in Howard County for riparian projects on the Upper Iowa River.

A Conservation Management Plan was prepared for a tract of land identified as the Jerald and Mary Kleve Fen in Clayton County, Iowa. Under the conditions of the Debt for Nature Program this property is subject to a 50 year conservation easement managed by the Clayton County Conservation Board and enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After the easement was accepted the property was donated to the Clayton County Conservation Board by the Kleve's.



ROS's Henry and Loose met with Gary Eldred, President of the Prairie Enthusiasts in Boscobel, Wisconsin. During this meeting they toured the organization's facilities and discussed potential partnership assistance.

ROS Loose reviewed a FSA inventory site (Hartwig) in Lafayette County, Wisconsin. A proposal was submitted for a perpetual easement.

ROS Henry attended the Iowa Private Lands meeting at Neal Smith NWR.

New plat books were obtained for all the counties covered by the McGregor District.

ROS Loose attended the Wisconsin Partners For Wildlife Annual Meeting. The meeting was held at the UW River Falls, Pigeon Lake Field Station near Drummond, Wisconsin.

Several wetland restoration sites were visited with Iowa DNR biologist Bob Kurtt. Construction was completed on the Fayette County Farm (6.5 acres) and the Roger Erickson (9 acres) Wetland Restoration projects.

Easement checks were completed on the Chickasaw and Floyd County FSA easements. Everything was found to be in order.

The accomplishment report for the challenge cost share habitat improvement project on the Birch Education Farm was completed for the RO.

ROS Loose attended a one day Grazing Lands Conference held near Cobb, Wisconsin and participated in a one day Shared Streams Field Day held in cooperation with the American Tree Farm Association and Trout Unlimited on a private tree farm near Gays Mills, Wisconsin.

## **6. RESOURCE PROTECTION**

### **6.a. Law Enforcement**

Citations for the year were as follows: two for unconfined dogs, two for littering, one for hunting with alcohol in possession, one for fireworks possession, nine for underage possession of alcohol, one for wanton waste, three for injury to plants, two for operating a boat with no running lights, two for no federal duck stamp, one for overbag of waterfowl, one for untagged birds.

A new Carolina skiff was obtained and outfitted for law enforcement patrols. The boat was used for several patrols during the summer months and is a huge improvement over patrolling from john boats on busy weekends.

At long last the Adams tract in the Turkey River bottoms is officially part of the Refuge and Refuge Boundary signs were posted in January.

Old evidence items were cleaned out of storage and disposed of properly.

A letter was sent to the Corps of Engineers concerning the Dickeyville communications tower. The tower was being offered as GSA surplus property and we expressed interest in the tower. The Wisconsin DOT was also interested. In the event the DOT maintains the site, we requested our equipment remain and the antenna be relocated to a higher position.

Information on the use of the commercial fishing landing on Red Oak road, Pool 9 was obtained from Realty.

MW Brown and ROS Henry investigated an unattended boat in pool 10 south of Bagley. The individual was attending the boat regularly, but not every 72 hours. He removed the boat after being contacted.

ROS Loose issued two written warnings on February 1st. One was to Tim Garside for vehicle trespass and a second to Roger Beck for a 72 hour boat mooring violation.

ADM Male and BT Henkenius met with the Corps, logger contractors, and several landowners February 15, to resolve a boundary issue south of Guttenberg. The landowners believe that they own portions of several lots that are currently signed as National Wildlife Refuge. All the historical land ownership maps indicate that it is Corps fee title land managed by the Refuge under the Cooperative agreement. The problem, however, is these land owners have been paying taxes on the land since the 1950s and now the maple stands within them have attracted loggers.

Lindell, Male, Loose, Henry, Henkenius attended the Upper Miss annual law enforcement meeting in Lacrosse on February 23, 24. Headquarters park ranger Dave Lescalleet held discussions on many river LE issues.

The annual law enforcement report was submitted to Bob Bartels for the District.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> ADM Male investigated an anonymous complaint about illegal digging by a Cassville Barge Company along the banks of the Mississippi River. The area in question was the barge fleeting area south of the Turkey River Landing. Based on Male's investigation the digging was permitted under the Corps permit for that area. This same area has been the site of concern for many years because of the excessive erosion associated with the fleeting operation. The Corps was contacted about this situation and agreed to meet onsite to address the problem.

ADM Male met with several landowners on March 6<sup>th</sup> along the Refuge boundary north of the Village of Cassville. The issue involved the cutting of trees and brush that they felt were impacting their well groomed yards.

District staff met with representatives from the St. Paul Corps District on March 21.

A letter was sent to Winegar Works Marina in Guttenberg regarding dock storage on the Refuge. Construction of new docks has resulted in encroachment onto Refuge property because of lack of space.

District staff met onsite in Pool 10 with Jerry Lee of the Corps Regulatory Office in LaCrescent, MN. Unresolved issues dealing with

Dock Permits in the Wille's Resort area and other trespass issues were discussed. Refuge land at Willie's Landing in Pool 10 was reposted as problems continue with mowing trails on the Refuge. ROS Henry visited residents at Wille's Landing in Pool 10 to determine who was mowing paths through Refuge property to the Corps permitted docks. Two said they would quit mowing and just keep walking through the area. One resident in particular, Benny Maiers, visited afterwards with DM Lindell about obtaining a permit to maintain a path to his dock. ROS Henry visited with Benny Maiers and other residents about the possibility of allowing one access path through the Refuge for the entire community at Wille's landing in Pool 10. Mr. Maiers has agreed to maintain 'his' path for everyone's use. DM Lindell has agreed to allow this under certain conditions. A compatibility determination was done for fishing access. The path has width restrictions and will be monitored. If conflicts arise with the local residents, then maintenance of this path will not be allowed to continue.

DM Lindell brought to the attention of the Corps a problem area in Pool 11 at Sunfish Lake. This is a Corps owned section not included within the cooperative agreement that is being used by ATV groups and as a dumping area. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, ADM Male met with representatives from the Corps concerning several trespass issues in this area. The meeting was a result of a letter sent to the Real Estate Division asking for some attention to the site. The area in question is not included in the Refuge but contains an impressive stand of mature cottonwoods and an active eagle nest. The Corps requested Service input into corrective actions they were contemplating to resolve the trespass issue.

Refuge Officers worked all three pools over the Independence Day Holiday. NOVs were issued in Pool 11 for the discharge of fireworks and a boating violation. A written warning was issued to an individual in pool 9 for fireworks that he left with others at a campsite. Refuge Officers provided assistance to several boaters within the District whose vessels had broken down.

Meetings were held with local Law Enforcement wardens with IDNR and WDNR on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Topics included mutual law enforcement efforts associated with large events planned throughout the summer.

District Refuge Officers covered the three District pools during the last weekend of July. Six NOVs for underage consumption and two for boating violations were issued in Pool 11.

Marine Radios were installed on the Boston Whaler and Carolina Skiff patrol boats.

On December 2, DM Lindell, and ADM Male inspected and documented dock storage violations in the McGregor Lake area. This area had previously been thought to be outside the Refuge boundary. Upon further examination by Lindell it was determined to be within the Refuge. Steps are now being taken that would lead to the elimination of this activity in the next couple years. DM Lindell and ADM Male met with representatives from the McGregor Dock Commission and Ray Sporleder, owner of McGregor Marina. The discontinued use of the historical dock storage area in the McGregor Lake area was the topic of conversation. A grace period of two years has been given to current users before the Refuge enforces the trespass issue.

ROS Loose and Maintenance Worker Jim Brown posted the Pool 9 Closed Area in preparation for the waterfowl hunting season. BT Henkenius and ROS Henry posted the Pool 10 closed area and BT Henkenius assisted ADM Male with posting in Pool 11.

ROS Loose searched for and destroyed any waterfowl blinds in Pool 9 which did not meet the standards of the new blind regulations established on the Refuge.

District staff worked on three different days during August inspecting and replacing signs along the Pool 11 closed areas (McCartney Bay 2,300 acres, Twelve Mile Island 1,180 acres).

District staff met on August 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss the pending waterfowl seasons and our enforcement strategy for the year.

ROSs Male and Loose attended the fall firearms and law enforcement refresher held at Sparta and Lacrosse, Wisconsin respectively on September 18 and 19, 2000.

Refuge Officers covered their respective Pools on the first day of the Wisconsin early goose season (9/1/01). Pressure was very light with the exception of hunters trying their luck on the local Prairie du Chien flock. Temperatures ran into the high eighties during the Friday opener. Officers also covered their areas that same week during the Labor Day Holiday.

ROS Loose's ability to ever fly in a small aircraft again was compromised on September 15, 2000 as he sat through 3 hours of continuous vomiting by a fellow passenger while engaged in a surveillance flight coordinated with the Houston County, Minnesota Sheriff's Department on the Reno Bottoms in upper pool 9. Refuge Officers Loose, Male, and Lescalleet joined forces with the Houston Co. MN Sheriffs Department. The effort was to work on a suspected meth lab and marijuana growing operation in the Reno Bottoms area. The Kendall Flying Service out of Bagley, WI was contracted for the air search on the day of the flight. Loose and the Houston Co. Sheriff conducted a grid air search of the area, while Male and Lescalleet worked from the airboat. Shortly after take off (according to Loose) the plane was filled with stomach contents from the Sheriff. No active lab was discovered the day of the search, however, the Sheriffs Deputy is convinced that there is drug activity in the area.

On September 26<sup>th</sup> Refuge Officer Male met the owners of the River Of The Lakes Resort, bordering the Refuge at Bagley, WI, Pool 10. The meeting was a result of an incident that occurred several week earlier while Officer Male was issuing a NOV to an individual. One of the owners and another family member became verbally combative while Male was escorting the violator off the crowded beach. One of the individuals did apologize later that evening after the incident, but the excuse of drunkenness was not convincing. During the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> all parties apologized and assured Male that it would not happen again. Male reminded them that they lease the ground where their Resort operation is located from the Federal Government. No further explanations were needed.

Refuge Officers worked all the Pools within the District for the WI and

IA waterfowl openers. In Pool 11 two NOVs were issued for hunting migratory waterfowl without a federal waterfowl stamp and one for the destruction of vegetation on the Refuge.

On September 29<sup>th</sup> District staff installed signs explaining the new blind regulations on Refuge access points.

An adjacent Refuge landowner in the Mud Lake area of Pool 11 cleared this "small path" (photo below) as he referred to it, "to gain access to the river". He was eager to pay the \$350.00 fine when he learned based on Iowa's collateral additions that grasses were assessed at \$50.00 per square foot which would have made his fine over \$40,000 for his total job.



On October 13<sup>th</sup>, Refuge Officer Male hand carried a Notice of Violation to an individual along the John Deere Marsh Road. The violation was for allowing an unconfined domestic pet to roam on the Refuge. The violator refused to accept the NOV through the mail on several occasions so he received special attention.

#### 6.b. Permits and Economic Use Management

A special use permit was issued to the McGregor Achievement Club for the annual Ice Fisheree. Due to mild weather, open water presented an access problem to Norwegian lake in Pool 10. The club requested vehicle access across an island by the Sny Magill landing. The permit was granted with the notice that this will not be an annual permit. The club notified all participants of the regulations and the special use permit. The weather was warm on event day and a mud trail existed after the event. ROS Henry worked the area following the event to check for illegal vehicle use. The trail continued to be used by people walking to their sites and some snowmobile tracks were evident, but no vehicle users were observed.

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with Al Hanson to discuss his application for a Special Use Permit for boat (including air boat) tours within the

Refuge boundary on pool 10. A Special Use Permit was issued to Al Hanson for air boat tours with specific guidelines and routes. Special Use Permits for the Pools 9 and 10 fish floats were renewed. A Special Use Permit was issued to the Iowa DNR, Guttenberg fisheries to place fish structures within the Refuge.

Refuge Revenue Sharing checks totaling \$43,515 were delivered to Allamakee and Clayton County treasurers in Iowa and to 12 township treasurers in Wisconsin.

A Special Use Permit was issued to the Clayton County engineer for the realignment of the Turkey River Road across Refuge grounds.

DM Lindell met with Gary Stirn, Winegar Works Marina, Guttenberg, Iowa, at the McGregor District office. Mr. Stirn requested permission to store boat docks in the Refuge portion of Bussey Lake, just north of Guttenberg. We wrote to his son late last winter regarding dock storage within Refuge waters. Mr. Stirn requested clarification about Refuge policy and location of the Refuge boundary in that area.

A Special Use Permit was issued to Tony Toye for waterfowl guiding service.

#### 6.c. Contaminant Investigation

District Manager Lindell and ROS Loose investigated a possible spill associated with a train derailment in the rail yards along Bloody Run Creek. A resident of Marquette had noticed a yellow substance flowing from the City's storm drain and thought it might be connected to the recent derailment of several cars carrying soy and dog food products. After examining the discharge site nothing was detected and the issue was referred to the State. Apparently the rail line had failed to report the accident to the State.

ROS Henry attended a workshop on responding to spills on the Mississippi River held in Prairie du Chien by the Tri-State Haz Mat group.

#### 6.f. Cultural Resource Management

A Special Use Permit was issued to Thomas Madigan of Hemisphere Field Services for archeological work being done for the Ambro Slough EMP project. A request for review of the Turkey River road realignment was sent to the regional historian.

#### 6.g. Land Acquisition Support

A letter was sent to GSA expressing our interest in acquiring excess property containing the Happy Corners tower so that we can continue to use it for radio communications. The facility was owned by the Corps of Engineers. A revised request for transfer of excess real and related personal property was submitted to GSA for the Happy Corners Tower Site.

## 7. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

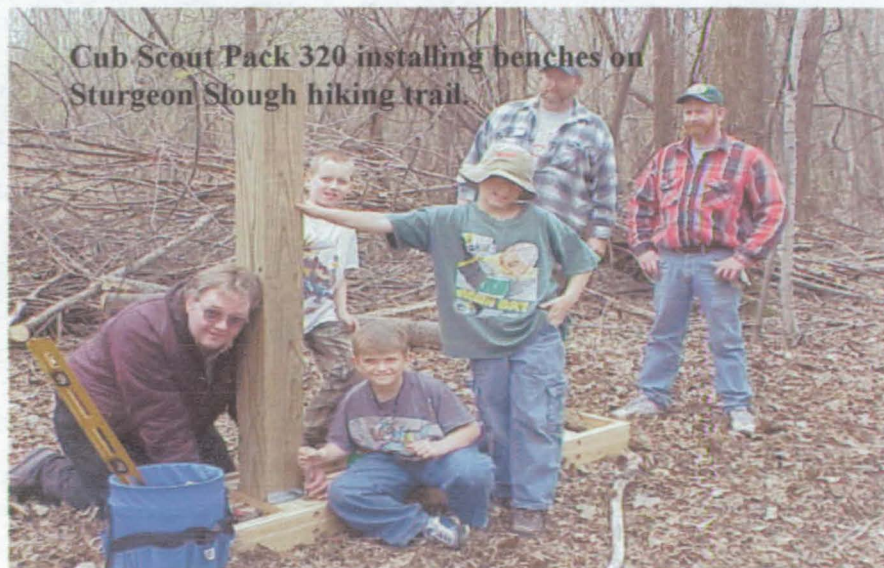
### 7.a. Provide Visitor Services

ROS Loose attended a meeting of the New Albin Army Road Committee. This working group is very interested in enhancing eco-tourism within their community and would like to see greater access and facilities on the lands adjacent to the Army Road. These lands are administered by the Corps, USFWS, and State of Iowa.

The District's first hiking trail was completed by ROS Loose on an island midway between Marquette, Iowa and Prairie du Chien, WI connected by a major bridge and highway. The trail was officially named the Sturgeon Slough Trail by District staff. The trail is about 1.5 miles winding through bottomland forest and wetland habitat. It connects to the old bridge location where an observation deck was built. Thirty-three Cub Scouts from Pack 320 of Prairie du Chien and volunteers participated in a trail work day held on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Volunteer Chuck Arch donated nearly 40 hours time building 4 benches which were set along the trail. WI Conservation Officer Denny Kirshbaum burned the native prairie at the start of the Trail with the assistance of the Prairie du Chien H.S. Natural Resources Class. Following the burn 6 pounds of native prairie mix was scattered and raked into the soil on the western end of the prairie.

ROS Loose corresponded with Wisconsin DOT regarding placement of a refuge sign along Hwy 35 in Wisconsin.

The McGregor District Staff hosted its First Annual Wildlife Film Festival. Films were shown two Thursday evenings on February 3 and 17. Thirty-three people attended the first showing which featured films on mussels, predators and hummingbirds. Eleven people turned out for the second evening of shows, which featured films on paddlefish and wildcats. All movies were shown in the cafeteria of the MFL MarMac School just north of McGregor, IA. Nine new potential volunteers were identified from the attendees.



Arrangements were made to send taxidermist Harvey Zeigler in Illinois several specimens for taxidermy work. Specimens included tundra swans, Canada goose, pileated woodpecker, indigo bunting, and an American kestrel. Mr. Zeigler has done several mounts for the District previously.

District staff met with Cindy Samples, Park Ranger Recreation, Winona headquarters on the creation of signs for the Cassville and Ferryville wildlife observation decks. Other discussions also included road signs, upgrading displays at the Visitor Center, and signs for the new hiking trail.



Bertom Landing Rehabilitation

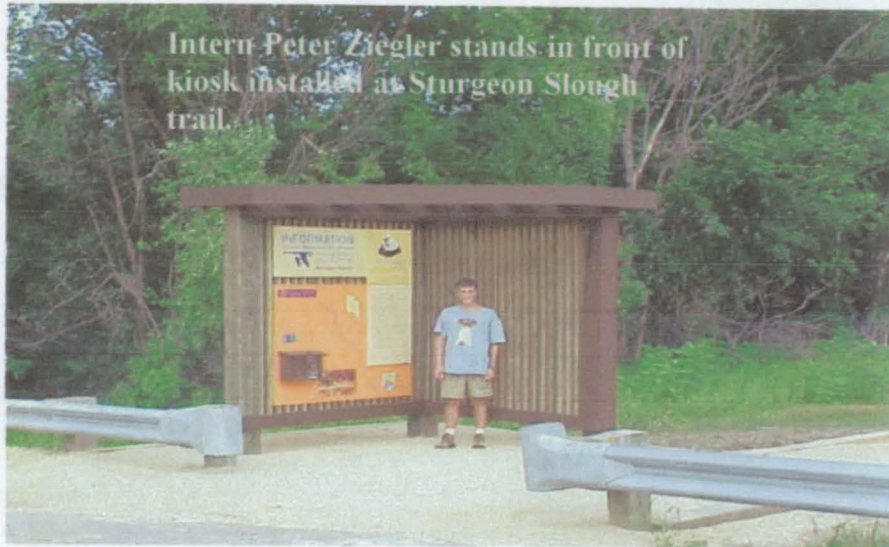


On November 30, DM Lindell and ADM Male attended the preconstruction meeting for the Bertom Landing rehabilitation project, pool 11. Also representing the FWS were Scott Halstead, Project Contract officer and Drew McDermott, Project Engineer. The contractor was represented by Russ Steiner, Acme Construction, Prairie du Chien, WI. ADM Male met with Drew McDermott (RO) and staff in addition to the Contractor for the Bertom Lake Boat Landing renovation onsite April 4<sup>th</sup>. Changes were made to the parking lot turn around area to avoid two large maple trees. Some additional modifications were made to the pull-out area associated with the boat ramp as well. ADM Male met with construction representatives on site at the Bertom Boat Landing on May 12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>. Topics included problems associated with the Township Road leading to the landing, and modifications to the alignment of the boat ramp. ROS Male made weekly inspections of the Bertom Lake Boat Landing Rehabilitation Project. Efforts to maintain the heavy equipment rail crossing even after project completion were investigated. Under the current project contract the crossing is to be removed when the landing is finished. The benefits, however, to leaving the crossing would represent approximately \$75,000 worth of earth work needed to construct another crossing, and the current savings for the removal of the landing. The crossing would not be used except in cases of major flood damage requiring significant restorations to the landing. Items to construct a differing abilities boat dock for the Bertom Boat Landing were ordered through EZ DOCK in Red Wing, MN. Dock specifications will allow refuge staff to remove the plastic dock seasonally.

Working in partnership with the Iowa Department of Transportation and nearly 25 community organizations, the McGregor District submitted a grant proposal titled the "Trail of Two Cities Legacy" for consideration under the FY2001 Public Lands Highways Discretionary Fund." This grant

proposal for \$500,000 is in support of a pedestrian path which if completed would help link the McGregor District office to 3 State Parks, a State Forest, and the Effigy Mounds National Monument.

A new kiosk was constructed at the entrance to the Sturgeon Slough Trail in Pool 10. New gravel was placed at several of the boat landings.



ROS Loose met with representatives of the Minnesota Department of Transportation in Rochester, Minnesota to request permission to install a new information kiosk, observation deck and Refuge sign on state property just north of New Albin, IA. DOT staff supported the project and offered to assist with building the proposed parking lot and turnout if it is approved by their State Office.

ADM Male met with Cabela's Store Managers to finalize the Refuge's involvement with the Cabela's Fall Expo planned for August 18-20.

District Staff completed construction of a visitor information kiosk at the start of the new Sturgeon Slough Hiking Trail in Pool 10.

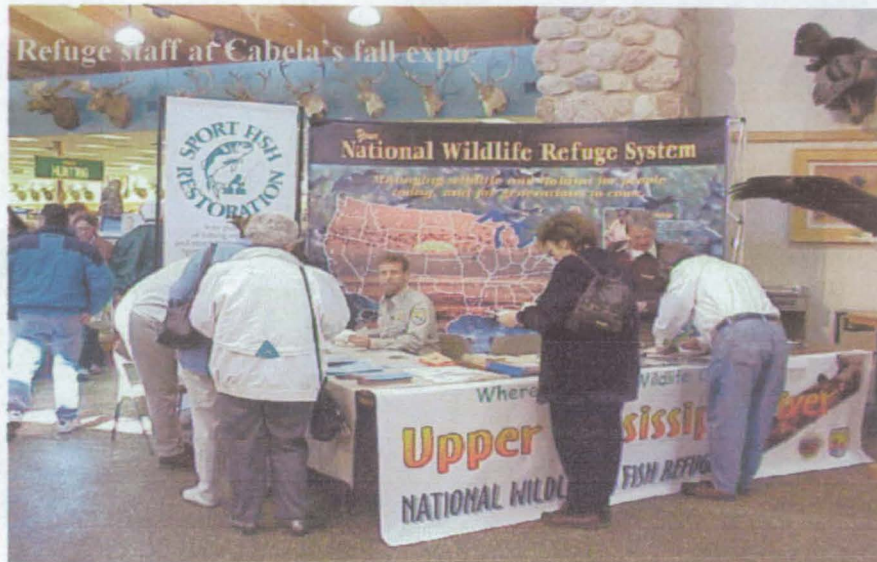
One of the old computers was installed in the Visitor Center with bird identification software for visitors to use. So far, the kids seem to enjoy it more than the adults.

RMIS Public Education & Recreation information was submitted to Winona on September 27<sup>th</sup>. The District received an estimated 1,009,456 visitors. Fishing and boating activities accounted for the majority of visits with 798,000.

#### 7.b. Outreach

DM Lindell and ADM Male met with the manager of the newly constructed Prairie du Chien Cabela's Store on 1/27/00. Topics of discussion included an overall lesson on the National Wildlife Refuge. Interestingly enough the manager made reference to the fact that their store is almost on the banks of the Mississippi, but did not know there was a Refuge or this agency he referred to as the 'Federal Fish and

Game'. Our awareness/educational process dealing with the Refuge started with the Manager and visitors to the store during their Spring Expo. This three day event drew 15,000 visitors last year and several thousand this year as well. The District was given a location inside



the store to get the Refuge message out. District staff also took the Refuge show on the road to the Fall Expo at Cabela's on August 18,19,20. Turn out was good at the event with an estimated 4,500 individuals participating. The District staff and displays were located at the main entrance to the store so most visitors were contacted upon entering the facility. In addition to the ducks on stick exhibit (on loan from the LaCrosse District) the display featured our two eagle mounts. Refuge literature, and a popular laminated free luggage tag with the Refuge's particulars located on the back of a wildlife portrait was available to visitors.

District staff participated in four different eagle day events during the month of January. Activities included an evening eagle biology class targeted towards volunteers helping with observation decks, an eagle fun facts program and staff assisting at observation decks in the District. The mounted eagles were loaned out for the Cassville and Guttenberg Eagle Days.

DM Lindell visited Kathy Reed, aid to US Rep. Jim Nussle, at his Dubuque, IA office. The purpose of the visit was to meet Congressional home staff, increase staff knowledge of the Refuge and discuss areas of interest. DM Lindell also visited Mary Day, Regional Director for the offices of US Senator Charles Grassley, at Cedar Rapids.

DM Lindell met with northeast Iowa trails committee to discuss public trails development in the area.

The Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges (FUMMR) held their January meeting in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. The Board approved a \$500 grant request from the McGregor District to create outreach materials for the District's portable display.

News releases were sent out regarding otter surveys being conducted by the Minnesota DNR by helicopter and the upcoming McGregor District Wildlife film festival in February.

DM Lindell participated in the Crawford County, WI career days at the Southwest Wisconsin Technical College. Lindell spoke to high school seniors about career opportunities and job requirements with the FWS.

ROS Loose presented a two hour program on the Refuge System to a Natural Resources class at the Prairie du Chien High School. ROS Henry gave a talk on wildlife populations on the National Wildlife Refuge to the McGregor 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. ROS Henry spoke to the Dubuque Audubon Society about both the Upper Miss and Driftless Area Refuges. They were quite surprised to learn about the Driftless Area habitats.

Information was given to an individual from Hopkinton, Iowa on accessing regulations related to migratory birds and endangered species.

DM Lindell and ROS Loose attended a COE/interagency sponsored public meeting at New Albin, IA regarding the Pool Slough Environmental Management Project. Personnel from the Iowa and Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources also participated.

DM Lindell met with personnel from Iowa DNR and Army Corps of Engineers to develop a "vision map" for pool 9, as part of a Fish and Wildlife Workgroup effort to plan EMP/HREP projects for EMP II.

DM Lindell attended the Minnesota Waterfowlers Association in LaCrosse and served as one of the "guides" for a bus tour of pools 8 and 9.

ROS Henry conducted an Earth Day program for MFL MarMac elementary school. Approximately 400 kids were in attendance at the classrooms. DM Lindell participated in a public meeting in Prairie du Chien regarding the proposed Ambrough Slough Habitat restoration and enhancement project. The meeting was organized by the Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Public comments provided some minor project design suggestions. There was no opposition to the project or any project features.

DM Lindell wrote several articles for the Waukon paper, a series for the Natural Resource column 'Resources Unlimited'.

Iowa Public television visited the District to film portions of an educational unit about the River. DM Lindell and ADM Male provided an air boat ride to the interviewer and camera person. The topic for the unit was the importance of the river as a flyway for migratory birds.

ROS Henry hosted MFL MarMac first graders at the Refuge Visitor Center. She talked to them about habitats of the Refuge.

ROS Loose accompanied 80 High School science students and their teacher (Dennis Evelsicer) from the Decorah Area on a 2 hour river boat cruise aboard the Sand Cove Queen. The Charter excursion left from the Lansing Marina and toured the main channel and Big Lake area. Students were introduced to the Mississippi River Ecosystem and the role of the Upper Mississippi River NW&FR in managing and protecting it.

Several meetings of the Friends of the Upper Miss Refuge meeting were attended. ROS Loose attended the initial meeting of the America's River Chapter of the FUMRR held in Dubuque, IA on August 22, 2000. Initial membership dues were collected and board members selected to establish this new chapter.

Public Service announcements regarding fireworks on the NWR were sent to local radio stations prior to the holiday weekend.

ROS Loose met with Amy Dalton, Cindy Samples, Refuge Headquarters and Lara Hill, LaCrosse District to discuss updating the Refuge's Web Page. Ms. Dalton is a professional Web Page Designer based in Lacrosse, WI and has volunteered her services.

BT Henkenius assisted Rodney Rovang from Effigy Mounds and John Stravers with a boat tour up the Yellow River of purchased property in cooperation with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

ROS Loose presented a program on wildlife to a Teacher Workshop held at Wyalusing State Park, Bagely, WI. This workshop is sponsored annually by the Wisconsin DNR and focuses on the resources of the Mississippi River.

DM Lindell represented the Service at the ground breaking ceremony for the new Dubuque River Museum and Learning Center. Others attending included State and Federal Congressional delegations or staff, state elected officials and agency personnel, local politicians and the public. Total attendance was over 200 people.

Three issues of the McGregor District newsletter were completed and distributed.

ADM Male was interviewed by WGLR Radio out of Lancaster, Wisconsin on August 4<sup>th</sup>. The main topic of the interview centered around delays with the Bertom Boat Landing project. Additional topics covered the increasing number of American white pelicans on the river, and eagle production on the Refuge. The Bertom Boat Landing interview ran that same day while the wildlife segments aired the following week.

ADM Male and ROS Loose met with IDNR Warden Collins on August 29<sup>th</sup>. The meeting at the request of Collins was to educate Mr. Collins on the exact position of the Closed Area line in Pool 9.

#### 7.c. Hunting

The 1999 waterfowl hunter success results were tabulated for the McGregor District. These results were based on 314 hunter contacts. Hunter success was calculated at 2.0 ducks per hunter per visit. Twenty different species were observed during the season in hunters bags. As is expected mallards were the most common species totaling more than 30 percent of the birds

#### 7.d. Trapping

This year's trapper information was entered into a new Excel database.

#### 7.e. Fishing

The Cold Springs Landing area was hot this fall for panfish. Catches of more than 40 keeper fish were common throughout October and part of November.

Ice fishing within the District was characterized as the best it's been in a "long long time". Catches of keeper bluegills and crappies were common place everywhere in the District. A Special Use Permit was developed for Terry Jeffries with the Bass Champions Team Trail for a weigh-in on Winneshiek Landing. The activity was considered a group event by definition and the requirements for holding the event were many. After guidelines were developed and sent to Jeffries he apparently re-thought the request and decided to hold the weigh-in off Refuge as was first suggested to him.

### 8. **PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION**

#### 8.b. General Administration

Several sign orders were sent to the Sign Shop this month including a design for a new banner to be used at outreach events.

DM Lindell attended Merit System Principles training at the Regional Office.

All controlled and accountable property records were transferred to a new data base. DI-105s were issued to all staff with property under their personal control. Two firearms were transferred to FLETC.

Comments on the Draft Service Manual Chapter on Refuge System Uses were sent to the RO by DM Lindell.

An accomplishment report was submitted for the new hiking trail.

CPR training was attended by Lindell, Loose, Henry, Henkenius, Brown and JTPA worker Ken Wilker.

DM Lindell attended the Upper Mississippi River/Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem Team meeting in Onalaska, WI.

DM Lindell attended a Fish and Wildlife Workgroup meeting (St. Paul COE District) in Onalaska. Environmental Management Program, phase II implementation was discussed.

DM Lindell and AO Palmer attended a Regional Administrative conference in Minneapolis.

ROS Henry attended training on the use of Adobe Photoshop software. ROS Henry converted everyone to Lotus Notes email from the old CCMail system.

A review of existing RONS projects, and the development of new projects was completed and submitted to the RO during April.

DM Lindell attended a District Managers meeting to discuss Refuge approaches to ongoing EMP II planning.

DM Lindell was on temporary duty in the Regional Office, July 5 through July 14. He served as acting Refuges Supervisor - Area 2.

DM Lindell attended an Ecosystem Team meeting in Havana, IL.

AT Palmer was busy completing purchase orders to complete end of the year spending.

DM Lindell and ADM Male attended a meeting with representatives of the Inspector Generals office and their contractor, the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The IG is conducting a review of the Division of Refuges law enforcement program. This meeting was one of many nationwide to meet and receive information from Refuge Officers and Supervisors regarding the LE program.

A new, used Boston Whaler was picked up from the Savanna District who obtained two from another government agency. The boat will need a great deal of work in order to be used on the river.

#### 8.c. Safety

Station safety inspections were completed by MW Brown. The monthly safety meetings were held and videos on winter driving, "Hantavirus Disease Prevention", heat stress, and others were shown and discussed. Contacts for the Seismic safety program database were submitted to the RO as Jim Brown and Cathy Henry.

#### 8.d. Maintenance

New tools arrived for the shop. Therefore, the shop underwent a good cleaning and rearranging.

#### 8.e. Volunteers

ROS Loose compiled and posted District volunteer opportunities on three web sites (American Birding Association, FWS and Volunteer Match). One response was received so far from the volunteer postings. JTPA Worker, Ken Wilker, continued to work for the District on storm damage related issues and contributed 586 hours during 2000. Job descriptions were completed for two intern positions on the District. Announcements were sent to 20 regional colleges and universities.

Peter Zeigler began a 10 week internship as a Refuge Operations Aid. Peter reported for duty on May 31, 2000 and completed a 10 week internship with the McGregor District. During his internship Peter donated 400 hours of time as a volunteer. District Manager John Lindell presented Peter with a gift certificate from Cabela's at a going away luncheon held during his last week.



Intern Peter Ziegler receives volunteer recognition from DM Lindell.

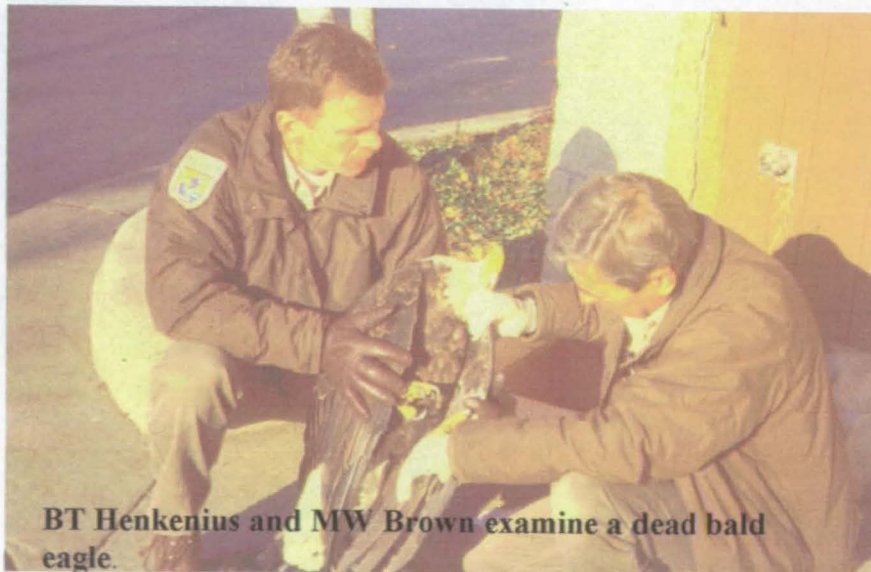
## 9. WILDLIFE

### 9.a. Endangered/Threatened Species

Coordinates of eight Wisconsin eagle nest locations were determined and forwarded to Eric Nelson for the Wisconsin Ornithology Society.

A total of 18 injured or dead eagles were processed by the District. Eight were injured and sent to the Minnesota Raptor Center. One went to the National Wildlife Health Center and the others to the National Eagle Repository.

Seventy-five eagles were observed at the Guttenberg Ponds on March 17.



BT Henkenius and MW Brown examine a dead bald eagle.

On July 17<sup>th</sup> ADM Male recovered an injured bald eagle in the Guttenberg Ponds area. This same eagle was reported to Refuge staff on June 8<sup>th</sup>, but escaped detection on several attempts to recover it. On the day of its' capture, the elusive bird was capable of short flights and appeared in relatively good shape except for an open wing wound. According to local legend the bird had been surviving on handouts from local fishermen. Unfortunately, after the bird was transported to the MN Raptor Center it was euthanized because of extensive infection throughout it's body.

Strong NW winds during the second week of November pushed eagle numbers within the District into the hundreds.

#### 9.b. Waterfowl

A major movement of waterfowl occurred on the District during the third week of December. This event was probably associated with the first cold weather to freeze back water areas significantly.

The first flocks of migrating Canada geese appeared on the District on February 21. Other first time migrants for the season included common goldeneyes, mallards, scaup, and common mergansers around this same time.

The District's first wood duck was observed on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

A flock of 36 greater white-fronted geese were observed in Pool 11 on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

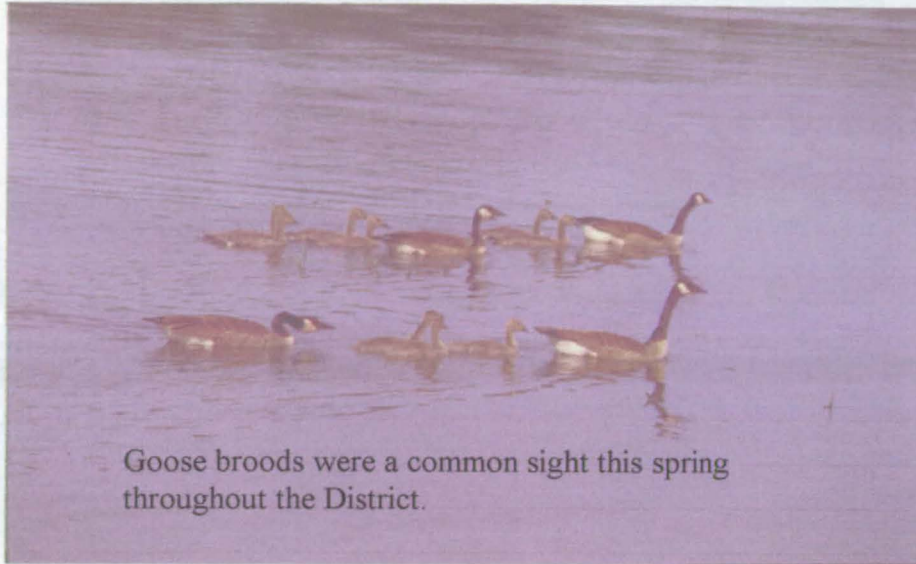
On March 7<sup>th</sup> a large flock of ~40,000 divers (80% scaup) were observed SE of the JD Marsh dike, another raft of ~25,000 divers was also observed NE of this same area. Both rafts appeared to be loafing and feeding in the area.

Small ruddy duck rafts were first observed within the District on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

Coot rafts have started to grow into the thousands of birds in lower Pool 11 as noted on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Headquarters biologist Nelson conducted a spring waterfowl survey at the request of the McGregor District. High numbers of birds were observed on the District and little data was previously available to enumerate spring use of the refuge by migrants. The Pool 9 closed area had 22,950 canvasbacks while the open area had 134,200. 22,275 mallards, 19,800 ringneck ducks, 21,805 scaup, and 10,900 swans were observed on Pool 9 among other birds. Pools 10 and 11 also contained several thousand birds. Pools 4 through 11 were surveyed.

Four different Canada goose broods were observed within the John Deere Marsh on May 2, several other broods were noted in the Lynn Hollow & Dago Slough area also. On May 19<sup>th</sup> six goose broods of (3, 3, 5, 6, 3, 8) young were observed within the Guttenberg Moist Soil Units.



Goose broods were a common sight this spring throughout the District.

Two Trumpeter Swans have settled in at Big Pond in Pool 11. The two have been seen since early spring. One bird has a neck band and the other a green leg band.

The fall waterfowl migration peaks were 326,985 canvasbacks on October 25, 78,385 lesser scaup on November 15, 6745 swans on November 15, and 429,645 total waterfowl on October 25.

#### 9.c. Marsh & Waterbirds

Cormorant flights of 300+ birds were observed in the evenings during the second week of October.

The first great blue herons of the season appeared within the District on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Killdeers were first observed four days later within the Guttenberg Moist Soil Units.

Early rookery checks on Pool 11 rookeries revealed up to ~10 percent of nests were occupied on March 6<sup>th</sup> within the Pig Island, Brinkman's, and Goetz Island rookeries.

On April 2 the first flock of American white pelicans was observed within the District just north of the Turkey River.

During April a pair of sandhill cranes was observed on several occasions within the Wisconsin river delta on the Refuge and surrounding area. Though no nest has been found other years, it is believed that this pair does nest in the area.

On April 18<sup>th</sup> a flock of over 1,500 double-crested cormorants were observed feeding within the old Vogt Lake Rookery, just north of Prairie du Chien.

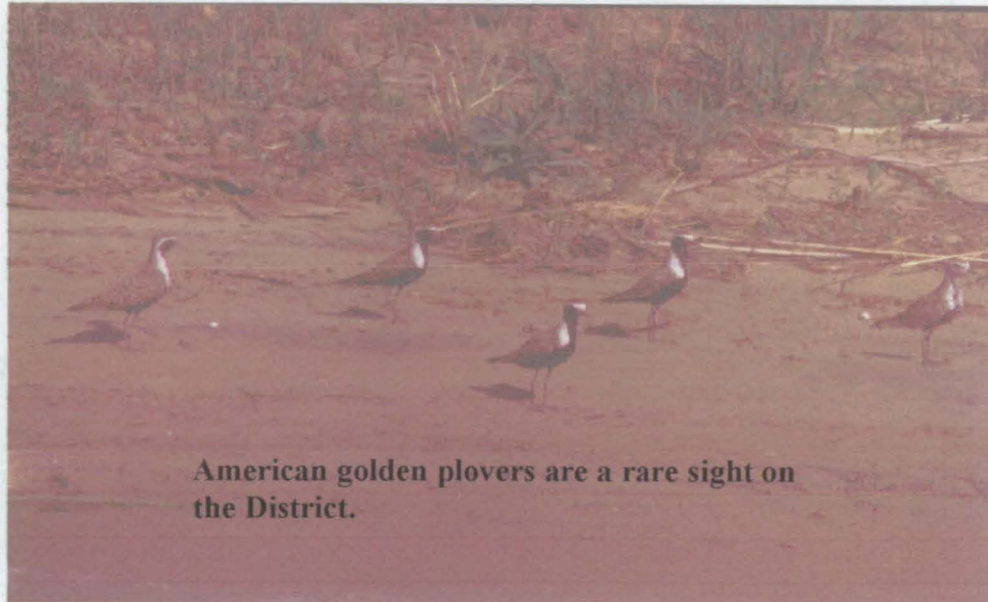
American White pelican concentrations were noted at several locations in the District in August.

Information on great egret nesting activity on the District was provided to WDNR Endangered Resources Division. In addition, a considerable amount of time was spent providing information on other colonial nesting birds and site history and activity.

On September 13<sup>th</sup> rafts of coots numbering in the thousands started to congregate in lower Pool 9. During that same week a flock of 260 American white pelicans were observed on the Pool 9 Island EMP site.

#### 9.d. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns & Allies

During mid-April water levels throughout the District were ideal for migrating shorebirds. Various species were observed on many of the exposed mudflats.



American golden plovers are a rare sight on the District.

The first bonaparte's gulls were observed on the District on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Caspian, and black terns were first observed on the District during the week of May 10<sup>th</sup>. By the following week large flocks of black and common terns could be observed feeding at the tailwaters of the locks.

Concentrations of black terns in the hundreds were noted at the tail waters of dams within the District on July 20<sup>th</sup>.

The first herring and ring-billed fall gull concentrations were noted throughout the District on August 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### 9.e. Raptors

Major movement of bald eagles occurred on February 29 within the District. This mass migration was associated with strong winds from the south. The District's first osprey of the year was observed fishing just north of Cassville, WI on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

BT Henkenius attended the Peregrine Falcon Society meeting. Several members and agencies from Iowa were there. Dubuque area nesters

frequently utilize the Refuge for food sources. Volunteers will be viewing bluffs for nesters this spring.

9.f. Other Migratory Birds

Ring-billed gulls ushered in the first warm weather and the start of the migration on February 21. The first turkey vultures of the season were observed in Pool 11 on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Tree swallows were first noted 12 days later.

A call was received from the Howard County NRCS office regarding about twenty dead blackbirds near Cresco. Iowa DNR biologist Bob Kurtt was interested in the cause of death but did not have a way to have them necropsied. We therefore sent the birds to the National Wildlife Health Center as pesticides were suspected as the cause of death. Although the signs of death were typical of pesticide poisoning, NWHC could not determine poisoning without further chemical analyses that they were not capable of doing. Without any further leads on persons responsible, the case was closed.

During May no yellow-headed blackbird nesting was noted within the John Deere Marsh Unit. Singing males and nesting birds were observed the last two seasons in the unit.

9.g. Game Mammals

During an evening patrol on July 16<sup>th</sup> ADM Male encountered 18 different deer along the six mile shoreline of Cassville Slough in Pool 11.

9.h. Other Resident Wildlife

The first sign that spring would come was observed on February 15 when cardinals were heard establishing territories. A snapping turtle was observed waking up for spring at the Guttenberg Ponds units on February 28.

**10. ITEMS OF INTEREST**

It was recently announced by the federal government that the Selective Availability of satellites was being removed which greatly improves the accuracy of GPS units. Therefore, the District ordered the relatively inexpensive commercial Garmin brand GPS units for use on various projects on the District.

Two Mute Swans spent the month of January just below the Prairie Du Chien bridge.

Training on sexual harassment was given by MW Brown.

The first barge/tow of the 2000 navigation season passed through McGregor (pool 9), bound upriver on March 4.

JTPA worker Ken Wilker's last day was unexpectedly March 24. The program did not receive the anticipated funding needed to keep him on through June. Ken contributed valuable assistance to many projects on

the District.

DM Lindell attended a District Managers meeting held at the McGregor District office annex.

Refuge staff met with Jim Ruwaldt, Madison, WI private lands office to discuss private lands program coordination and issues.

DM Lindell was on detail in the Regional Office May 2-5 to assist with Regional processing of FY 2001 Refuge Operations Needs projects.

McGregor District staff attended a Refuge wide staff meeting hosted by the LaCrosse District on May 17 - 18. The meeting included a field tour of the Halfway Creek project, Round Lake landing rehab, and Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center.

#### **11. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS**