



FRIENDS OF SQUAW CREEK REPORTER Mound City, Missouri

Fall 2006

Volume 7 Number 3

SQUAW CREEK CALENDAR:

Fall Workday	September 16
Habitat workdays	September 23, Oct. 7, 28
Youth Day - Missouri Waterfowl Association -	September 30 (tentative)
Big Sit	October 8
National Wildlife Refuge Week	October 8 - 14
Fall Open House	October 7 - December 3
Outdoor Classroom Dedication	October 14
& Volunteer Appreciation Day	
Deer Count/Hay Ride	November 4
Eagle Days	December 2 - 3

VISITOR OFFICE COMMITTEE

Vic Miles	816-444-2459
Barbara Crouser	816-233-0034

REFUGE WETLAND COMMITTEE

Vic Miles	816-444-2459
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EAGLE DAYS COMMITTEE

Jeanine Montgomery	660-935-2254
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PLEASE give the above committee chairpersons a call to assist them.

Items for the newsletter must be sent to George W. (Bill) Scheil at 7311 Ditzler, Raytown, MO 64133 or to him at gwsch@juno.com. The deadline for the next issue will be November 15.

Note that there are three events scheduled for October 14th. The Friends Board meeting is set for 10am. Then the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner is at 12 noon. Then the Outdoor Classroom Dedication is at 2pm.

Banners

The refuge received some challenge cost share money this year for banners to be placed in downtown Mound City. In 2007, Mound City will be celebrating 150 years and they really like the banners we developed and had erected during the Refuge Centennial in 2003. The Mound City Chamber of Commerce (which the Friends of Squaw Creek are members) will be providing brackets and the City will install once they are made. Each banner will have the Mound City 150th logo on the top and the bottom will have either a snow goose, mallard or bald eagle. The banner will say "Welcome to Mound City" and then, "Home of Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge". They will stay up the entire year (except during Christmas) and will be a great way to let visitors know about the refuge. They will be completed in September and should be up by early October. The next time you visit the Refuge this fall, be sure to make a trip into Mound City to see the banners. We have also received a request from Forest City for banners next year. They will also be celebrating 150 years.

Signs

We have several new signs under production from our Regional Sign Shop. This includes a directional sign located at the junction of Highway E and the Mound City exit from Interstate 29. The Subway Shop will permit us to attach to their sign so that visitors entering Mound City at McDonalds will get directions to the Refuge. There are also new informational signs to be placed at Teal Pool, Mallard Marsh and the Cattail Triangle.

Informational Kiosks

There will be 4 new informational kiosks erected this fall. A new single panel kiosk will be placed at the headquarters building to replace the present one that is deteriorating. In addition, there will be a 2 panel kiosk at the base of the steps to the headquarters, a 2

panel kiosk at the Teal Pool parking lot and a single panel kiosk at the Eagle Overlook hiking trail. Signs are now being developed and installed as soon as they arrive.

Loess Bluff Hiking Trail

One of the primary projects for the YCC this summer was to extend this trail so that it ties into the Callow Trail. This was accomplished at the end of July and now visitors can hike from the headquarters to the Callow Trail. The YCC also replaced all of the old wood rails and replaced them with plastic material. Rails have been installed on the new trail. The trail is now approximately 0.9 miles long.

Wetland Habitat & Water Conditions

A great deal of habitat work was accomplished the past 6 weeks in the wetlands. Most pools have significant amounts of smartweed and wild millet which is great waterfowl food. Mowing of unwanted vegetation was accomplished in Mallard Marsh, Snow Goose A, B and C, several of the moist soil units and Rice Paddy moist soil units. We closed the water control structures on both Davis and Squaw Creeks at the end of July and we are now flooding for shorebirds in several of the units.

Summary of the Minutes from the July 15th 2006 Board Meeting:

One of the topics discussed at the Board meeting was how to get new members. It was suggested that we have a display board at the annual Eagle Days event and hand out information about the Friends group.

Tommie reported that new shirts were ordered for the bookstore.

Oct. 14, 2006 was set for the outdoor classroom dedication and next board meeting.

It was suggested that a sign be made for the outdoor classroom.

Attention was made that our website needed updated and the photo gallery added.

The duck stamp promotion was discussed. (Anyone wanting more information about the duck stamp and how the proceeds from the sales can help the refuge - contact George Scheil)

The next meeting was set for Oct. 14 @ 10a.m.

Bookstore

If you haven't been to the refuge lately, you've not only missed out on nature and wildlife but also all the new items at our bookstore! We have lots of new and fun merchandise. You'll find something for the whole family. Besides lots of good books of course, we also have, T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, toys, tapes, cds, jewelry, mugs, postcards, playing cards, pens, stationary, posters, stuffed birds that sing their natural songs, games, and much more. Next time you visit the refuge be sure to come on up to the headquarters to check it out and say hi to Jim.

2005 Annual Report

Membership:

The Friends' membership continues to average 100 paid members. Although most of the members reside in Missouri, fourteen other states are represented in the membership.

Outreach and Communication

We continue to fund and participate in the Refuge's major public events, International Migratory Bird Day, Eagle Days, Work days, Habitat Restoration, Staff Office on Week-ends, Kiwanis & Chamber of Commerce memberships, and furnish ½ page on Squaw Creek Eagle Nest truck plaza menu.

We continue to make ourselves active in the community, have an annual meeting and publish 4 newsletters annually, as well as publish information about the Refuge on our web site, www.squawcreek.org.

Projects

Funded initial construction of Outdoor Classroom.. We still need laboratory and other equipment as well

as water service, electrical service, benches, seating and an entry door. We plan to apply for a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for equipment in 2006.

Financial

Balance 1/1/2005 \$30,950.62

Balance 12/31/2005 \$29,076.25

(Totals include Checking Account, CD's, & Investments but not bookstore inventory)

Help for Migratory Birds by Kay Charter

I'll never forget the first time I birded a property that had been purchased with conservation dollars. At least I thought at the time it was the first such property. My husband and I were traveling across southern Canada and stopped at a large pond with a thick, willowy edge separating water from prairie. Although there were many ducks, it was the Common Yellowthroats and Marsh Wrens skulking in the cattails that grabbed my attention. But my most vivid memory of that day is the sign noting that Ducks Unlimited had purchased the property.

"Ugh," I said to my husband. "Hunters." He didn't argue. Instead, he said, "Look at all the songbirds here. If this place hadn't been saved by duck hunters, they wouldn't have a home."

He made a point I hadn't considered. It had never occurred to me hunters were spending millions on conservation and that birders (among other outdoor lovers) were reaping the benefits.

On that same trip, more than 20 years ago, we also visited Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula. There we got our first glimpse ever of Trumpeter Swans, a species driven nearly to extinction early in the century. It was there, too, I learned that the Ducks Unlimited pond in Manitoba was not, in fact, the first place I'd visited that was purchased with conservation dollars. Because many of our National Wildlife Refuges have been purchased with "Duck Stamp" funds, and because we'd visited many

Refuges during our travels, I'd actually spent a lot of time on land bought with conservation dollars.

Until our visits to these two sites, it never occurred to me that any organization or group, except for federal governments and The Nature Conservancy, purchased or provided funding for the purchase of environmentally important lands. I was like most other people in thinking of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp as nothing more than a license to hunt waterfowl. While the stamp does provide for such hunting, its true value is in the millions of acres purchased with the funds it brings in. That should be especially important for those of us who are concerned about dwindling habitat and vanishing wilderness. Since its inception in 1934, a full 98% of the funds generated from duck stamp sales have been dedicated to the purchase of refuge land. That's \$14.70 of the \$15 price for the stamp. Today, more than half a billion dollars has been generated. That money has been used to purchase more than five million acres of wetland and grassland habitat in 550 National Wildlife Refuges. One of my favorite Refuges, New Mexico's fantastic Bosque del Apache, was purchased virtually entirely with duck stamp dollars. It's hard to imagine a world without Bosque and its tens of thousands of overwintering Sandhill Cranes.

Ric Zarwell, Important Bird Area Coordinator for Iowa, wrote the following about the sale of duck stamps and subsequent purchase of refuge lands: "This is fantastic news for birders. Why? Because hundreds of species of birds, including many that are rapidly declining in other portions of their ranges, require these grassland and wetland habitats for continued existence. Just like the Short-eared Owl on the habitat sign that accompanies this article, none of the birds that are alive today – simply because Stamp-purchased habitats exist – give a hoot about who pays for the land on which they nest and raise their young. What matters is that more individual habitats are protected. However, despite providing so much of the habitat that bird-watchers value dearly, (and will value even more in the future), few birders and other nature-oriented citizens know that the Stamp program even exists."

Today there are estimated to be more than 40 million birders in North America. Imagine how much habitat could be saved if every single one of them purchased

at least one Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. During a recent phone conversation with Zarwell, he said that it's time for birders to step up to the plate on this issue and do their part. This stamp is available online, at most U. S. Post Offices and from many sporting goods stores. I've already purchased mine. When will you buy yours?

Note: There is also a supply of duck stamps for sale at the Squaw Creek office.

Biological Happenings for 2006

By

Frank Durbian, Refuge Wildlife Biologist

It was a very busy spring and summer this year, as usual. We had good numbers of spring snow geese and waterfowl during the late winter early spring migration and excellent spring shorebird numbers. We completed 15 prescribed burns on the refuge totaling 431 acres without incident. These burns have greatly benefitted the Refuge prairie habitat. Speaking of habitat – don't fret about the weedy growth in the native grass and wildflower plantings in the parking area. We are trying to let the native wildflowers and grasses drop seed and get some good growth on before we mow and/or burn the area this fall. Allowing the seeds to drop should result in an even better stand next year and make it easier for us to begin dealing with the weeds. Also keep in mind that what you see is actually quite good wildlife habitat.

This year the Biological Program hosted one Biological Science Technician, two graduate students and six Biology Interns. Everyone had an opportunity to work on a majority of the projects occurring both on and off of the Refuge.

[The photo did not survive intact, so the Summer students and interns follow]

Amanda Griffin and Adrienne Cunningham, Graduate Students; Nathan Petersen, Heather Bankie, Andrea Cole, Justin Hamilton, Carlie Babcock, Mark Hefner, Biology Interns; Brian Lomas, Biological Science Technician.

Biological research projects this year included the continuation of the Regional Impoundment Study and Breeding Least Bittern Spatial Ecology Study and a

new Survey for Massasauga Populations off of the Refuge. The Regional Impoundment Study is a multi-Refuge project, being conducted in coordination with the USGS, which includes 21 refuges across the country and involves evaluating the impact of alternative wetland flooding regimes as they relate to providing optimal shorebird habitat. We are currently in the second year of this three year study. We are in the second and final year of the Least Bittern study which is a project being conducted by Amanda Griffin, a graduate student at Northwest Missouri State University. The field data collection has been completed and she is currently writing her thesis. This year was an average year for least bittern production but we did see several fledglings so overall bitterns did well this year. During the spring we initiated a one year study that entailed surveying for massasaugas on three sites off of the Refuge with the hope of locating new massasauga populations for the state. We successfully located a new and now fourth population for the state, on private land north of the refuge. Adrienne Cunningham, a graduate student at Northwest Missouri State University will be working on this population next year for her graduate research project. Additionally, myself, Biological Science Technician Brian Lomas, and Biological Intern Nate Petersen traveled to Wisconsin to assist the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the USDA with avian influenza sampling. We will also be capturing shorebirds for avian influenza sampling on the Refuge during the fall migration.

I have also completely updated and re-worked our Refuge web site. The new web site should replace the old web site by the end of August so please take a look at it and tell me what you think. I would appreciate any constructive comments that you can provide. Of course it has a direct link to the Friend's web site! Future plans for the new web site include adding pages for shorebird and waterfowl counts, and notable wildlife observations.

Notable wildlife observations so far this year include Barn Owl, Caspian Terns, Sandhill Crane nest that was unfortunately depredated prior to hatching, River Otters, Osprey, Red Shouldered Hawk, Alder Flycatchers, and of course 2 eaglets fledging from the Mallard Marsh nest.

That's all for now. I hope everyone had a great spring and summer and I look forward to seeing everyone at the Refuge.

**The Experiences of Nate the Biological Intern at
Squaw Creek NWR
By Nathan Petersen**

I came to Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge looking to gain field research experience. After spending five long years in a genetics lab, I needed to try something new, to get outside and do something I would truly enjoy. The Refuge appealed to me because of the diversity of research projects and variety of fauna that I would have the opportunity to encounter. This experience would help me to decide my future plans, and would be crucial for the pursuit of future jobs or the continuation of my education. Squaw Creek, in effect, has acted as a starting point for my career change, and I couldn't be happier.

From the moment that I arrived at Squaw Creek, I felt like a welcome member of the biology team. Refuge Wildlife Biologist Frank Durbian and Biological Science Technician Brian Lomas have both been a pleasure to work with and have provided me with a wealth of knowledge and training. The remaining refuge staff has also been courteous and helpful during my stay. The work environment at Squaw Creek has been fun and rewarding. Should riding around on an air boat really be considered work?

The projects that I have had the opportunity to work on cover a broad spectrum of project type, subject matter, and scale. I have been a part of smaller graduate student and refuge projects such as the radio telemetry of least bitterns as well as a Massasauga rattlesnake study. Region wide projects that I have worked on include a frog abnormality surveys, as well as shorebird and frog call surveys. Most recently, I was able to participate in a national avian influenza study requiring the mist netting of shorebirds in Wisconsin. All of these projects have given me a broad range of experiences and skills that build my resume and prepare me for the future.

The majority of my time at Squaw Creek has been involved with the least bittern radio telemetry project. I was able to take part in almost all aspects of this project, from the building of the null/peak radio telemetry trucks, to the capture, handling, and tracking

of least bitterns. Radio telemetry is a very transferable skill, with many existing projects across the country looking for telemetry help. The Massasauga rattlesnake study gave me the opportunity to gain herpetology experience, from the methods used to capture snakes to the identification of local species. I was also able to handle Massasauga rattlesnakes, including taking measurements and PIT tagging captured specimens. The avian influenza project gave me valuable mist netting experience, another skill that is highly transferable to future work. This study also provided me with shorebird identification skills and handling experience. These are only three of the many studies that I have been a part of while at Squaw Creek. Other projects that I have worked on include; a least bittern behavior study, a wood duck nest box usage survey, prairie wildflower surveys, insect identification, and shorebird food (invertebrate) surveys.

All of the skills and knowledge that I have gained while at Squaw Creek have directly led me to a position at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in California. In California I will be studying the effects of urban encroachment and habitat fragmentation on small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. I will also be part of a similar study focusing on carnivores (bobcats, mountain lions, and coyotes). While this is another volunteer position, it gets me one step closer to my goals. Without the excellent experience that I have gained this summer, I have no doubt that I would not have been selected for this position. My time at Squaw Creek has been very well spent. I would highly recommend volunteering for the Refuge System, Squaw Creek in particular, for anyone who is considering a career in field research or wildlife biology. The experiences that are to be gained are an invaluable asset for the future.