



FRIENDS OF SQUAW CREEK REPORTER Mound City, Missouri

Spring 2008

Volume 9 Number 1

SQUAW CREEK CALENDAR:

Spring Open House	Mar15-May4
Refuge Habitat Workdays	Mar 8, Apr5, May3
Women in the Outdoors	April 12
Spring Volunteer Workday	April 19
Int. Migratory Bird Day	May 10

VISITOR OFFICE COMMITTEE

Vic Miles	816-444-2459
Amanda Griffin	660-572-0267

REFUGE WETLAND COMMITTEE

Vic Miles	816-444-2459
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EAGLE DAYS COMMITTEE

Amanda Griffin	660-572-0267
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PLEASE give the above committee chairpersons a call to assist them.

Visit our website at www.squawcreek.org for recent bird surveys, events, etc.

If your mailing label does not have a date of January, 2009, or later, membership dues are in order. Please use the form on the back page of this issue. Those with a "Last issue" warning label are two years behind in dues.

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 May 15.

Friends of Squaw Creek Support the Women in the Outdoors

The 3rd annual Women's Outdoor Skill Workshop will be held on Saturday, April 12 at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. This event is designed to introduce women to outdoor activities to suit individuals' curiosity in a friendly, laid-back, non-competitive environment. There are 29 potential activities that will be offered from birding techniques to Dutch oven cooking, loess bluff ecology, wildlife photography and fly fishing. The Friends of Squaw Creek have supported this event each year and have even provided instructors. This year, the Board has decided to be a Golden Spur Sponsor – a \$250 donation – to this great event. If anyone is interested in attending, knowing what classes are available, wants to be an instructor or wants to assist in anyway, please give Corey Kudrna a call at the refuge headquarters or look on-line in the Refuge web site. This will provide another opportunity for visitors to learn more about the Friends.

Friends of Squaw Creek Support Refuge Interns

The Board of Directors for the Friends of Squaw Creek will be supporting 3 interns this spring from February 11 through May 2. The Board voted to provide a stipend of up to \$1,000 for the spring. Two of the interns will be working each weekend during the spring open house by providing

interpretive programs and roving interpretation each Saturday and Sunday. This will be an excellent opportunity to inform visitors about Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, the refuge habitats, wildlife and management and answer any questions they may have while driving the auto tour route. It will also provide an opportunity to present an organized program about similar topics either in the auditorium or in the George L. Scheil Outdoor Classroom. The biological intern will be assisting the Refuge Biological staff in the Eastern massasauga project and a variety of other ongoing surveys and census projects.

Deer Hunt

The 2008 Squaw Creek deer hunt primitive firearms antlerless white-tailed deer hunt took place January 5, 6 & 7. Although the refuge staff organizes and manages the hunt, it is part of the Missouri Department of Conservation's managed deer hunts and requires application/drawing prior to the hunt. The hunt this year was limited to 100 hunters who could hunt on all 3 days. Each hunter could harvest a maximum of 4 deer, including 3 antlerless deer and 1 antlered buck. However, hunters were required to check in 3 antlerless deer prior to being able to harvest an antlered deer. This strategy was to increase the number of female deer without removing a large number of bucks. A total of 1,265 individuals applied for the 100 permits. During the hunt, a total of 92 participated, harvesting 164 deer. Hunter success (%who harvested at least one deer) was 75%. It was interesting to note that only 3 of the 25 yearling and adult bucks that were checked had antlers while the remainder had previously shed their antlers and were checked as antlerless deer. Typically only 2-3 shed bucks have been checked as antlerless deer during previous hunts.

Eagle Days – November 30 – December 2

The 29th consecutive Eagle Days was held at the refuge headquarters. The refuge recruited a total of 10 Fish and Wildlife Service employees from other stations in Region 3 and 5 other volunteers to assist.

Puddles, the Region mascot was present, the Ioway Tribe rented the 25 foot American bald eagle and the Friends had a food booth. A total of 801 students from 17 schools from Northwest Missouri/Northeast Kansas/Southeast Nebraska attended the November 30 school day. The poor weather and predicted ice storm on December 1, kept crowds to a minimum on Saturday but a record number of visitors attended on Sunday. However, overall attendance was approximately 1,500 less than an average year. A total of 1,656 entered the office, 1,235 attended the live eagle show, 2,190 drove the auto tour route and 337 took the free refuge bus tour.

Ice Storm

Weather conditions in December devastated trees and shrubs and shut down the refuge for a good portion of the month. A severe ice storm coated trees and refuge roads December 11 & 12 with more than 2 inches of ice. As a result, limbs and branches from silver maple, cottonwood and other trees and shrubs splintered and broke off causing damage to the refuge woodlands. The refuge auto tour route was closed for 6 days before all of the debris could be pushed off of the road and overhanging branches could be trimmed. In addition, the entire refuge complex was without power and office closed from Monday evening, December 10 to mid-day Saturday, December 15. The total snowfall for December was a record 17 ½ inches and was the 2nd wettest December on record. A total of 4.3 inches of precipitation was recorded compared to the record 4.57 inches in December 1944.

Christmas Bird Count

The annual Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count was completed Tuesday, December 18. Fourteen birders spent more than 46 hours completing the count. A total of 90 species were observed which was considered good despite the poor weather conditions just days before the count. Some of the noteworthy species included 49 trumpeter swans, 231 bald eagles and 2 sandhill cranes. There were 4

species with high counts for the survey including 4 pileated woodpeckers, 161 American crows, 43 snow buntings and 23 purple finches. The 6 Eurasian collared-doves were considered unusual species.

Refuge Visitors Tell All!

The Refuge has maintained a Visitor Log in the past 21 years in which visitors can record their name, address and comments about their visit. This is strictly voluntary and they are not required to write in the book. In the past 4 years, the refuge has been interested in finding out how visitors learn about Squaw Creek in order to improve or change our method of reaching out to potential visitors. From October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007, 1,299 entries were logged in and 666 provided comments – a little more than half (51.3%) gave us some indication of how they found out about the refuge. By far, the largest number of responders (264) indicated either family or friends told them about the refuge or that they live nearby. Approximately 166 were repeat visitors. Sixty-nine visitors saw the signs or were just driving by while 68 read about the refuge in magazines, newspapers, books, brochures or saw news reports on television. The website and internet made up 6.3%, clubs, groups, college or school visits made up 4.5% and 4.1% saw the refuge on a map. Word of mouth still seems to be the best means, particularly if visitors get a good impression either with the facilities or with their first encounter with a Service employee or volunteer staffing the desk during the open weekends. It is important that those working the desk continue to be professional and give good information. It is also a good idea to encourage visitors to write in the Visitor Log so we can continue to monitor effective means of reaching people.

New Refuge Employee Arrives and Another Will Depart

The refuge has been able to add another position to the staff to improve our prescribe fire program. Sam Vanourney entered on duty January 6 and will be responsible for the refuge fire program as well as assisting burning at Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge. He previously worked in Iowa. Wildlife Biologist Jessica Lee completed her graduate degree

last spring and was sent to Squaw Creek to assist in the biological program for 13 months. She is being moved into a full time position to Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge at the end of May.

Junior Naturalist Program

Amanda Griffin has been working on the Junior Naturalist Program for this summer. She did such an outstanding job last year for the refuge and has been working on programs for this summer. The Friends supported this program last year by purchasing a number of items she needed. Once the Region allocates funds (hopefully in February), we will know if we will be able to fund Amanda all summer. Our goal is to support her as in the past. The program will tentatively be held every Thursday evening from May 29 through August 28. We are very excited about this program because it provides an opportunity to get kids in the outdoors to learn more about their natural environment. We have an excellent facility – the George L. Scheil Outdoor Classroom paid for by the Friends – to support this program

HAROLD BURGESS HONORED

The September/October 2007 issue of *Refuge Update* had a nice article about Harold Burgess, former manager at Squaw Creek. Excerpts follow:

Harold Burgess - 33 years Paid, 11,839 Hours Unpaid.

Harold Burgess worked for the National Wildlife Refuge System for 33 years across five states. In 1980 he retired. Well, not really.

Over the next 27 years, Burgess donated 11,839 hours to the Refuge System. “That’s the equivalent of having one full-time person work nearly six years,” said Jodi Stroklund, refuge manager for the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, the beneficiary of many of those volunteer hours. On June 6, Burgess officially retired from volunteer service - and celebrated his 90th birthday.

Burgess remains physically and mentally agile, says Bryan Winton, manager of Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, who learned his way around the refuge by going out with Burgess. Winton was a 35-year-old assistant manager, Burgess an 82-year-old volunteer. "I learned to get out of the office and go get dirty," said Winton.

Together Winton and Burgess would remove bees from nest boxes. "He was always pointing out where we needed to do work," recalls Winton. "He knew where roads were that you couldn't find because they had grown closed. There were always additional work assignments after a day out with Harold ... we weren't always keeping up with things as well as he thought we should."

Burgess says he will continue to help with bird counts. His own life list includes 511 birds in the United States and another 87 recorded while working briefly as a rubber farmer in the West African country of Liberia. He told a local Texas newspaper that he enjoyed volunteering for the Refuge System more than working. "I don't have any boss. I just go ahead and do it."

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