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Condors Soar Once More Over the Grand Canyon

Under a spectacular sky and in front of a festive crowd of 1,000 people, Service biologists freed six young California condors on Arizona's breathtaking Vermilion Cliffs on December 12, the first time the birds have been seen in the Grand Canyon State in 72 years.

The released condors are officially classified as an experimental and non-essential population — a term that allows considerable flexibility in the management of the birds and should help allay fears among some local landowners that their presence could lead to greater federal control or regulation of private property.

The crowd joined Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt in a countdown that culminated in a radio signal to biologists atop the cliffs to open the condors' pens, where the birds had been carefully monitored during a six-week acclimation period.

To the delighted gasps and shouts from the throng — which included Arizona Gov. Fife Symington and Sen. John McCain — the young birds left their pen, took a few hops to the cliff's edge and within minutes took to the air, exploring the sky and some rocky cliffside roosts.

The release attracted considerable media interest, both in the United States and abroad. Service public affairs specialists worked with the condor team for weeks to meet the media's logistical requirements in a remote area devoid of conventional communications. This included arranging pool video and still photo coverage, providing for satellite television transmission, and tending to the needs of reporters hungry for



Liftoff. A California condor takes off after being released on Arizona's Vermilion Cliffs. Credit: Jeff Robbins/AP Photo.

new information.

"The weather cooperated, the birds cooperated — this was absolutely the best-ever launch that we have had," said Service condor coordinator Robert Mesta of the Ventura, California, Field Office. "This one could not have been better."

Mesta said the single greatest challenge in the Arizona condor release was convincing landowners that the presence of the birds would not interfere with use of their land. The Service released the birds only after an extensive series of meetings with local governments in southern Utah and northern Arizona, public hearings in both states, and a three-month public comment period.

"There was apprehension at the

outset, which I could understand, but after we talked to people at length, and backed up our assurances in writing, people in the release area seemed to relax. That was testimony to a lot of candid meetings, a lot of talking and, I think, some newfound credibility on both sides," Mesta said.

The condors released in Arizona were bred in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo and The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. This was the first time condors had been released outside of California. Peregrine Fund biologists will monitor the condors, all of which are wearing radio transmitters.

Peregrine Fund president William Burnham said it was

precisely that kind of involvement and cooperation between government and the private sector that made "this historic event" possible.

The California condor's decline paralleled the settling of the American West, as settlers shot and poisoned the birds and others collected condor eggs. There were only nine left in the wild by 1987, when they were trapped and a captive breeding colony begun in Los Angeles. Today, there are 120 condors in the world — 20 in the wild in California, four in an acclimation pen in Ventura, California and 90 in captive breeding facilities in California and Idaho.

The Arizona release involved cooperation with the Service by a number of organizations, including The Peregrine Fund, the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Utah Department of Natural Resources, the Hualapai Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Phoenix, Los Angeles and San Diego Zoos, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Kaibab National Forest, Grand Canyon National Park and the Grand Canyon Trust. 🐾

— Ken Burton,
Public Affairs, Washington

Eagle Kills Condor

As *Fish and Wildlife News* went to press, news came that a golden eagle had killed one of the six condors released in Arizona. The condor tended to be a loner, venturing from the tight social unit formed by the other birds, which may have made it more vulnerable to predation. The remaining five condors were doing well.

Babbitt Honors Lard, Marler, and Smith for Distinguished Service

At a December ceremony in Washington, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt honored three longtime Service employees — **Claude Lard, Sam Marler and Dick Smith** — with the Department's Distinguished Service Award for their contributions to fish and wildlife conservation.

The award is the highest given by the Department to career civil servants and recognizes outstanding achievement in their careers. Each received a written citation highlighting their achievements. Here are a few excerpts from the citations:

Claude Lard — "In a 50-year career with the Service, working in all areas of refuge management, land acquisition and a wide variety of significant realty matters, Mr. Lard distinguished himself with his dedication to excellence in resource management. He has been a significant, innovative force in the preservation, acquisition, and management of vital waterfowl habitats throughout the Gulf of Mexico region, the Atlantic coast, and riparian areas along the Colorado River. His efforts have established Servicewide standards and procedures that are followed by fellow professionals in the natural resource field throughout the country."

Sam Marler — "Mr. Marler served the Department of the Interior with distinction in a number of challenging assignments throughout his 20-year career. Among the most demanding was his tenure as the Service's first Assistant Director for External Affairs from 1986 to 1992. In this capacity, he not only accomplished lasting achievements but, more importantly, established an enhanced standard of professionalism for natural resource communicators both within and without the Service. In 1992, Mr. Marler was asked to assume the challenging role of Regional Director in the Service's Great Lakes Region . . . One measure of Mr. Marler's success is quickly found in the impressive number of wetland restoration sites that have been restored through creative partnerships."



A career honored. Secretary Babbitt presents former Deputy Director Dick Smith with the Department's Distinguished Service Award at a December ceremony in Washington. At left is Deputy Assistant Secretary Don Barry. Photo by Tami Heilemann.

Dick Smith — "Through his 31-year career with the Service, Richard N. Smith demonstrated leadership, integrity and dedication to a degree that not only resulted in significant career achievements, but also set a standard for executive excellence throughout the Service . . .

He contributed significantly to ensuring proper balance between scientific research and management initiatives, while balancing natural resource conservation and public access and use of those resources . . . [As the Service's deputy director] Mr. Smith's strong leadership role was evidenced by decisions concerning numerous sensitive natural resource issues of national and international impact."

Babbitt also honored seven Service employees for valor in risking their lives to save others. **Gary E. Peeples** was a student intern at Pea Island NWR in North Carolina when he rescued a family of four when they were swept away from the beach by a rip tide during the summer of 1995.

Also at great risk to themselves, a group of six refuge employees in Florida rescued numerous residents

of the Gulf Coast of Florida after a severe winter storm in 1993 caused rapid flooding of coastal areas. Many of the residents were elderly and would have died if they had not been rescued. Five of the heroes were on duty at Chassahowitzka NWR. They are:

Theodore Ondler, assistant refuge manager; **James W. Pilgrim**, law enforcement officer; **Bob Quarles**, refuge maintenance worker; **Cameron Shaw**, refuge manager; and **Benita Smith**, office assistant. The sixth hero was **Val Urban**, refuge manager at St. Marks NWR.

In addition, Babbitt presented the Secretary's Diversity Award for Accessibility/Employment of Persons with Disabilities to Region 5's Section 504 Coordination Team. According to the citation, "the team developed and implemented a systematic approach for ensuring full accessibility to all regional facilities open to the general public . . . The individual and concerted efforts of the team members inspired many project leaders and supervisors to fully support the intent of the 504 program."

The members of the team are: **George Cortes**, EEO specialist; **Thomas Comish**, outdoor recreation planner; **Janice Rowan**, fish biologist; **Michael Kirby**, budget assistant; **Christine Nolan**, administrative officer; **Paula Hutton**, secretary; and **Kurt Otting**, architect.

Finally, Babbitt presented the Department's Public Service Award to **Roger Preuss**, a wildlife artist and lifelong conservationist, and the Conservation Service Award to **Vin Sparano**, a longtime writer and editor with *Outdoor Life*.

Preuss' citation noted he contributed or generated more than \$4.5 million for habitat preservation and countless hours of work to wildlife causes over the course of his distinguished career as a wildlife artist, which included designing the 1949 Duck Stamp.

Sparano's citation noted that he "personified the role of active sportsman and dedicated conservationist. As a writer and editor, he sought to convey faithfully the cornerstone values and virtues of hunting and angling."

Holy Cow, Batman, There's a Senator Outside the Cave!

It was the last place you might have expected to find a United States senator on the night before Halloween — at the entrance of an abandoned iron mine gazing into the eyes of a bat.

But that's where Sen. Frank Lautenberg went to pledge his continued support for the Service's work in conserving endangered species like the Indiana bat that dwells in the abandoned Hibernia Mine in Rockaway Township, New Jersey.

Lautenberg was enamored with the bats. "I just want to hug them when you see how important they are," he told an audience of 30, including news media. "One bat can catch 3,600 insects in a single evening. Bats also protect agricultural crops by eating insects."

The senator went on to point out that researchers are analyzing the anti-coagulant properties of vampire bat saliva, which could lead to a new blood thinner for heart patients.

For the New Jersey Field Office, the senator's appearance represented the fruit of two years



Eye on the bat. U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg inspects a brown bat held by Mike Valent, a biologist with the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife, outside the abandoned Hibernia Mine in Rockaway Township, New Jersey. Credit: Kim Ambridge/USFWS



Rounding up round gobies. Scott Yess from the La Crosse Fishery Resources Office and volunteer Byron Karns brave frigid weather to capture round gobies, an exotic fish from Eurasia, on the Illinois Waterway near Lake Michigan. Gobies are believed to stay within a few inches of the river bottom and to be extremely territorial. If they follow the path of the zebra mussel and other exotics, spreading from Lake Michigan to other waterways, gobies could have significant impacts on other bottom-dwelling fish, darters and those species whose eggs could be preyed upon. Biologists caught 61 gobies and determined the species already has spread 50 miles from Lake Michigan. Photo by Maureen Gallagher.

of educating his staff about endangered species issues in New Jersey.

Starting in 1994, Service Endangered Species Biologist Annette Scherer and Communications Specialist Angela Tracy established regular contact with the senator's special events coordinator in his New Jersey office, emphasizing the importance of bats and other endangered species to New Jersey.

The value of bats in pest control, for example, was an important hook in getting the senator's staff to agree to the event, Tracy said. Control of mosquitoes and agricultural pests is an important issue in New Jersey.

"Your message often needs to be tied back to the voters and to economic issues," she said.

Scherer and Tracy also pointed out that saving the habitat of an endangered species often conserves other non-endangered species. "We needed to educate the staff on the important role that species such as bats play in the overall health of an

ecosystem and that protecting an endangered species benefits other species," Scherer said.

But the most important factor was the personal touch. Establishing a relationship with the staff is critical to getting a senator or congressman to come to an event. With a senator, that is usually the special events coordinator in the home office. With a congressman, it is usually the district coordinator.

"You can't think of dealing with the staff as a one-time event or as something you do only when there's controversy," Tracy said. "You have to be in contact with them consistently and keep educating them."

The little touches also are important. After the event at the mine, the New Jersey Field Office sent Lautenberg a photograph of the senator surrounded by children looking at a little brown bat.

"With any luck, he'll hang it in his office," Tracy said. 🐉

— Hugh Vickery,
Public Affairs, Washington

Ecosystem Team Tackles Alaskan River's Popularity Problem

Effective conservation depends on America's passion for wild places and wild creatures.

Unfortunately we sometimes can love a place to death.

That is the challenge facing the Service on the Kenai River in Alaska, famous for king salmon as large as 90 pounds as well as for brown bears and an abundance of other wildlife. Fast-paced development and growing numbers of boaters and anglers on the river are eroding banks, destroying salmon rearing habitat, and leading to more conflicts between bears and humans.

Fortunately, the Service's adoption of the ecosystem approach came at just the right time for the Kenai River and the surrounding peninsula, an area which includes Kenai NWR. The South Central Alaska Ecosystem Team has undertaken projects to conserve and restore the Kenai that would never have been thought of, much less undertaken, five years ago.

Jim's Landing, a busy takeout spot for Kenai boaters located on the refuge, is a good example. Ecological Services used a challenge grant to purchase materials to shore up river banks around the landing that were eroding. Refuge staff drove live willow branches into the banks with the hope that they would sprout and begin to create root structure. They also anchored fallen trees along the banks to reduce the velocity of the river and provide fish cover. Already, biologists are seeing the results as vegetation has grown and sediment has begun to build up along the banks.

In the past, it would have been highly unlikely Ecological Services would have ventured onto a refuge, but with people from different program areas now working jointly on the ecosystem team, such projects are increasingly common along the Kenai. In addition, the ecosystem approach has made it easier for those outside the Service (such as the state of Alaska, which put up challenge money for the Kenai project) to get involved. By

setting a good example on refuge lands, the Service is encouraging numerous private landowners to protect and restore riparian habitat on their properties as well.

"Communication among Service programs has been one of the big benefits of the ecosystem approach," said Ann Rappoport, Ecological Services' field supervisor in Anchorage.

"It's very unusual to have individuals from Refuges, Ecological Services, and Fisheries in the same room planning and prioritizing activities."

The ecosystem team frequently looks outside the Service for opportunities. For example, the team decided to provide funds for educational efforts at the Kenai River Center, a facility run by the state and the Kenai Peninsula Borough, where landowners and developers can acquire permits for construction along the river. The funds allow the center to educate landowners about conservation—for example, how to avoid damaging small tributaries where salmon spawn.

The team also joined the Natural Resources Conservation Service last year in funding aerial photography of the Kenai region. This year, the team will acquire the photography in digital format that can be used to track habitat change through a geographic information system.

In addition, the team is supporting innovative outreach programs such as the "Adopt-A-Stream" program, in which local students obtain hands-on instruction about aquatic ecology in local salmon streams.

"We need to look at the big picture while at the same time solve individual problems," said Gary Sonnevil, project leader of the Kenai Fishery Resources Office. "The ecosystem approach has encouraged a greater understanding and appreciation of the problems affecting the entire watershed."

— Tony DeGange,
Ecological Services,
Anchorage, Alaska



No elbow room. Anglers crowd the Kenai River in Alaska hoping to catch salmon that grow as large as 90 pounds. Pressure from recreational use and development is straining the area's ecosystem. Photo by K.P. Farrar.



Stripers are back. Maryland Governor Parris Glendening, left, and an aide join Fisheries Chief Gary Edwards, right, at a celebration of the recovery of striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay from the dangerously low levels of the 1980s. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' recent "young of year" striped bass survey, which measures the fish's reproductive success, netted an average of 60 young rockfish with each pull, breaking the previous record of 40 fish per pull in 1993 and establishing a 43-year high in the number of juvenile rockfish in the bay and its tributaries.

Two-Year Investigation Nabs Pesticide Dumping Pilot

Refuge Manager Steve Gard got a rude surprise two years ago when he was out working on the Mississippi Wetland Management District in Granada, Mississippi. As he watched helplessly, a crop duster flying overhead dumped hundreds of gallons of pesticides on a nearby tract within the district.

Gard had a good idea who owned the crop duster, and he soon found out the man made a regular practice of emptying his chemical tanks over the 500-acre area known as the Povall tract.

But even so, it took more than two years of intensive investigation by the Service and the Environmental Protection Agency to bring the culprit to justice.

"We knew who was doing it, but we had to make sure we had the evidence so we could take an airtight case before the judge," Gard said. "We didn't want this guy to get off by saying he was just dumping water."

The case wasn't without its difficult moments. Law enforcement agents and refuge staff spent countless hours staking out the site. Once, a refuge employee and a special agent were taking photographs of the culprit when they were sprayed with chemicals.



Illegal dumping. A crop duster dumps chemicals on the Mississippi Wetland Management District in Granada, Mississippi, in this picture taken by investigators.

Their skin burning, they dashed into a nearby catfish pond to get relief.

It also wasn't without challenges. The chemicals the crop duster was dropping break down in six to eight hours. Gard and his fellow investigators had to quickly gather plant samples, put them on ice, then ship them to laboratories across the country to identify the chemicals. They later checked these against the pilot's flight logs to find out if those chemicals matched what the crop duster was carrying that day.

Eventually the hard work paid off. This fall, Mark Gary, president of Gary Flying Service, pled guilty to two violations of the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act and Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. Under the terms of a plea agreement, Gary paid \$100,000 in restitution for the clean up and reforestation of the land damaged by the pesticides. This is believed to be the largest settlement ever paid by an individual for damages under the NWRAA. Gary was also placed on probation for two years.

Investigators said Gary either dumped excess chemicals after a crop dusting job or filled his tanks with water to clean them out before another job, then dumped the chemical-laden water on the tract. This saved him flying back to the site of the crop dusting job where under the law he should have dumped the waste water.

Prosecutors could have sought a long jail sentence, but they agreed to a plea bargain stipulating a fine and probation because of the Service's interest in restoring the Povall tract, which had been badly damaged by years of chemical bombardment.

Virtually all the plants, including trees, had been killed, creating what in effect was a brown hole in the landscape. Even 50-year-old oaks were badly damaged by the constant bombardment. The Service is using a portion of the \$100,000 fine to restore the land, including replanting trees and rehabilitating the soil to restore its chemical balance.

"Probably the best thing is that news of what happened spread like wildfire," Gard said. "It sent a strong message to any other crop dusters in the Mississippi Delta who might be doing the same thing." 

Smuggling Conviction Sends Renowned Conservationist to Jail



Hyacinth Macaw. Credit: Gordon Morrison, *A Field Guide to Tropical Forests*. Houghton Mifflin.

Tony Silva was once an internationally recognized bird expert and a leader of efforts to conserve parrots and other exotic birds. Today, he's behind bars after pleading guilty to trying to smuggle the same birds he had been so outspoken about protecting.

A federal judge sentenced Silva to seven years imprisonment without parole after he pled guilty to leading an international parrot smuggling ring and income tax evasion.

U.S. District Court Judge Elaine Bucklo also fined Silva \$100,000 and ordered him to perform 200 hours of community service during a

3-year supervised release program following the prison term. This is one of the most severe sentences ever imposed for bird smuggling.

"The real victims of these crimes were the birds themselves and our children and future generations who may never have the opportunity to see any of these rare birds," Judge Bucklo said.

The Service's Law Enforcement Division's Branch of Special Operations spearheaded "Operation Renegade," a 3-year international probe to stem illegal trade in wild birds.

Bucklo also sentenced Gila

Daoud, Silva's mother, to a 27-month prison term followed by a one-year supervised release program with concurrent 200 hours of community service.

The value of the smuggled wildlife totaled \$1,386,900. Included in these illegal shipments were substantial numbers of extremely rare hyacinth macaws.

"The severity of the sentence in this case sends a clear signal that the United States will absolutely not tolerate the depletion of irreplaceable natural resources for personal gain," Acting Service Director John Rogers said. 

Too many antlers? Hold an auction

What do you do when 1,700 pounds of antlers fall into your possession? The Law Enforcement office in Anchorage held an auction and raised more than \$57,000.

Special Agent James Fuller was inspecting a shipment of reindeer antlers when he discovered the Russian nationals who were attempting to import the antlers had hidden 60 animal gallbladders in the shipment. When the Russians realized Fuller was on to them, they fled the state and escaped to Russia. The Service seized the shipment.

Antlers, which can be legally imported, are used in oriental medicines, and it was likely they were headed for the Asian market.

But the real profit is in brown bear gallbladders, which fetch top dollar on the oriental black market for their alleged medicinal value. (Interestingly, only four out of 60 gallbladders smuggled in the reindeer antler shipment were from brown bears. The remainder came from water buffaloes, cows and pigs.)

With the help of a licensed auctioneer, the Service sold the seized antlers for \$57,095. Of that amount, \$48,785 was deposited into the Lacey Act Reward Fund. This fund is used for a number of purposes, including rewarding individuals who provide information about violations of

federal wildlife laws. The proceeds of the auction also allowed Law Enforcement to obtain reimbursement for some of the costs incurred in the storage and handling of evidence.

The auction was the first of its kind in Region 7 and may serve as a template for other regions to dispose of forfeited property. It has proven to be a useful tool in relieving the burden of deciding what to do with large quantities of seized and forfeited property, otherwise unwanted by educational or scientific institutions. 🐟

— Steve Tuttle,
Law Enforcement, Anchorage



Confiscated antlers. Special Agent James Fuller looks for smuggled gallbladders in shipment of reindeer antlers. Photo by Connie M.J. Barclay.

Partnership Gives New Life to Wetland Habitat on Texas Gulf Coast

The 900-acre tract on San Bernard NWR had once been coastal marsh and prairie. But in the 1950s, before the refuge was established, a failed attempt at agriculture scarred the land and left it so overgrown with an invading plant useless to most wildlife the area came to be called by that plant's name — Wolfweed.

Thanks to a partnership between the Service, Ducks Unlimited, Phillips Petroleum Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Wolfweed was reborn this fall, and thousands of waterfowl and other migratory birds descended on its newly restored wetlands for the winter.

The Service and Ducks Unlimited originally developed a plan to build a reservoir to provide water to the tract in 1991. The nearby Sweeney Complex of Phillips Petroleum enthusiastically embraced the idea, and in 1993, DU, Phillips and the National Fish



Water to a dry land. A 20,000-gallon-per-minute pump sends water cascading into the heart of the Wolfweed project as 80 people who attended an October dedication ceremony watch from a nearby levee. Photo by Al Jones.

and Wildlife Foundation each contributed \$25,000 to the effort.

The first phase of the project was completed and dedicated this year. It involved the first of three

compartments of a water storage reservoir, requiring construction of 2.5 miles of levees to a height of 7 feet. The work also involved installation of a pump system and

development of 170 acres of moist soil units.

The next phase of the project will include construction of an additional 2 miles of levees and development of an additional 300 acres of moist-soil units. When completed, Wolfweed Reservoir will supply fresh water to a series of shallow, managed wetlands and provide vegetation used by waterfowl as food and cover. The water will also be used to reduce saltwater intrusion in up to 3,000 acres of refuge marshes, increasing their value to a dozen species of ducks that migrate through and winter on

the 27,414-acre refuge.

Already, waterfowl are benefiting. This winter alone, some 15,000 migrating waterfowl will find a haven at Wolfweed. 🐟

— Ron Bisbee, Manager,
Brazoria Complex,
Angleton, Texas

Sunken Steamship at DeSoto NWR Finally Gives Up Her Last Secret

The *Bertrand*, a steamship that sank in 1865 on the Missouri River in what is now DeSoto NWR, gave up her secrets slowly.

More than a century passed before a pair of intrepid treasure seekers located her under the Big Muddy's silt and began the salvage of what remained of her cargo, a host of artifacts now on display in the refuge's visitor center — everything from flasks of mercury to hazelnuts to hobnail boots.

But it would take another 30 years before the *Bertrand* would give up her most intimate secret. Imbedded within a cargo of British pocketknives were the earliest known Stanhope viewing lenses, 3/8-inch long convex lenses that magnify a tiny drawing or photograph.

Often the images were religious in nature, but in this case, with the cargo headed for gold miners in the Montana Territory, they were pornographic.

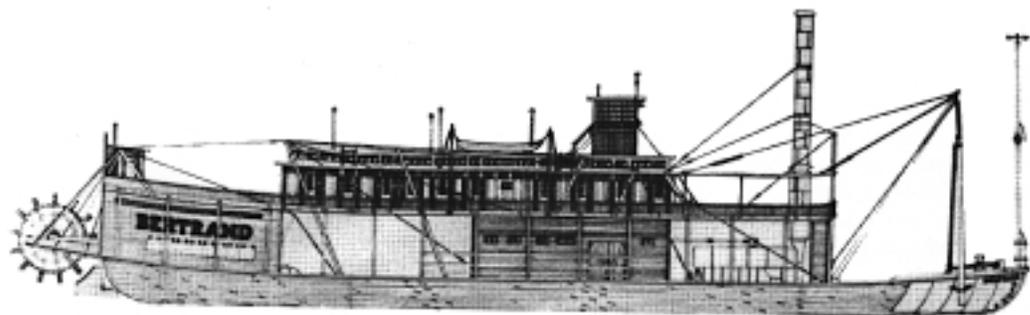
The lenses blended in so well with the knives that archaeologists examining the collection entirely missed them, assuming them instead to be glass rivets set in the

knives by their manufacturer. It was not until a historian with expertise in Stanhope lenses visited the center last year that the secret came to light.

According to historians, Stanhope lenses were routinely set into any number of utilitarian items such as pens, letter openers, tape measures and canes. Ironically, the knives aboard the *Bertrand*, one of which contained a risqué photograph of two men and a woman, were manufactured by Joseph Rodgers & Sons of Sheffield, England — well-known at the time as "Cutlers to Her Majesty," the prudish Queen Victoria.

The lenses themselves were invented in England by Lord Charles Stanhope and manufactured in LeMans, France. They were inserted into pocket knives and other mundane tools in an effort to boost sales. No doubt their presence, though virtually indistinguishable to the casual observer, was a big selling point, especially to miners facing cold and lonely nights in the Montana Territory.

— Jeanne Harold,
Museum Curator
DeSoto NWR



Good Will Sprouts in Refuge Greenhouse

Staff at Havasu NWR in Arizona were set to construct a small greenhouse to grow native plants for habitat restoration efforts when there was a sudden brainstorm — why not put the greenhouse at a local elementary school and let the children grow the plants?

The idea delighted fifth-grade teacher Dee Dee DeLorenzo at Diamondback Elementary School in Bullhead City, and the greenhouse, purchased with refuge funds, soon became a community project. The local fire department and a couple of businesses provided materials and spouses and friends chipped in several Saturdays' labor to complete the project.

The dedication ceremony featured the mayor, city planner, and a gaggle of local media, and generated a ton of good will in the community. In fact, the local Rotary Club heard about the project and invited the refuge manager to speak at a meeting. What's more, a host of new volunteers arrived on the refuge doorstep. Meanwhile, refuge biologist Christy Smith is teaching the children about native plants and animals.

The greenhouse, it turned out, is providing Havasu with a lot more than a few seedlings.

— Gregory Wolf,
Acting Refuge Manager,
Havasu NWR, Arizona



Finishing touches. Fifth-grade teacher Dee Dee DeLorenzo and Havasu NWR biologist Christy Smith lend some elbow grease to the refuge's new greenhouse located at Diamondback Elementary School in Bullhead City, Arizona. Photo by Gary Smith.

Ecological Services Celebrates Golden Anniversary

As World War II drew to a close, America began a building spree that would dramatically change the nation's landscape. The Service, concerned about plans to construct dams and undertake water projects on rivers across the land, established the Office of River Basin Studies to provide technical advice on these projects. A half century later, this office has evolved into the Ecological Services program.

A lot more than the name has changed. While assessing the impact of water projects is still a component of Ecological Services, the division gradually has taken on a wide range of responsibilities.

In response to the warning in *Silent Spring*, the Service established a National Pesticides Monitoring Program in the 1960s. This program has evolved into Ecological Services' more comprehensive Environmental Contaminants Division. In the 1970s, the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act further expanded the division's mandate.

The Endangered Species Act has certainly placed Ecological Services in the public eye. The list of endangered and threatened U.S. species now includes more than a 1,000 species. Ecological Services is working more and more with

private landowners to develop Habitat Conservation Plans that allow economic development while conserving threatened and endangered species. The division also takes an active role in efforts to protect and restore vital habitat through programs such as Partners for Wildlife which can avoid the need to list some species.

Today, Ecological Services has 80 offices with 1,440 employees and a mandate that touches a wide range of fish and wildlife issues from monitoring the effects of contaminants on wildlife to the recovery of endangered species to the restoration of wildlife habitat.



Special Agents Crack Down on Illegal Market in Migratory Bird Parts

After a two-year investigation in which they posed as traders of Indian artifacts, Service special agents lowered the boom on an extensive illegal market in migratory bird parts in November.

Agents carried out search and arrest warrants in New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado, charging that 35 individuals and businesses killed or sold golden eagles, bald eagles and other migratory birds. In the process, they seized whole eagle

skins, wings, tails and wing bones; whole hawks, wings and tails; and owl wings.

The investigation revealed that the illegal feathers were being sold to make popular Native American-style items such as fans, Kachina dolls and bustles. Many of these items were sold to trading posts, collectors, tourists, and individuals participating in pow-wows. Items being offered for sale were made with feathers from at least 25

different species, including eagles, hawks, kestrels, magpies, flickers, scissor-tailed flycatchers and anhingas.

Agents were told that in one pueblo during last year's winter migration, more than 60 eagles were intentionally killed either by being shot or caught in leg-hold traps baited with fresh meat. The agents located trap lines and were sold dead eagles with trap marks on their legs and feet.

The Service decided to end this investigation, dubbed "Operation 4-Corners Feather Sales," prematurely to prevent more eagles from being killed. During this investigation, special agents learned that in today's market, a single golden eagle feather could sell for about \$100; a red-tailed hawk peyote fan, \$150; and an anhinga feather fan, \$300. 

Landowners Become Stewards of Endangered Species in Wisconsin Partnership Program

Bob Welch is the kind of friend an endangered butterfly needs.

The junior high science teacher routinely gets 30 teenagers to run around his upstate Wisconsin farm, monitoring the movements of Karner blue butterflies. He also allowed a graduate student to raise 1,200 butterflies in his kitchen, and he convinced his doubting 72-year-old neighbor that selective logging on her land would help the rare butterflies.

Welch is one of 103 landowners in Wisconsin who take part in the "Wisconsin Landowner Contact Program," a five-year-old partnership between the Service and state of Wisconsin to encourage private landowners to conserve endangered species on their land. The program is funded by the Service under the "Grants to States" section of the Endangered Species Act.

Interested landowners voluntarily sign an agreement "to make every reasonable effort to avoid construction, trampling, mowing, pesticide application, and any and all detrimental activities to

the (endangered species)" on their property. They also agree to notify authorities if they notice any changes, such as marked increases or decreases in populations.

The agreements place no restrictions on the property's deed, but the landowners promise to notify the state before selling their land. "Landowners in effect become the on-site stewards of their resource," said David Kopitzke, head of the program for Wisconsin. "There are no fees, no fines, no penalties. This is an entirely voluntary agreement between landowners and the state."

Some landowners in the program, for example, are stewards of the forked aster, a yard-high herb crowned with snowy white clusters from August to October, whose nectar is attractive to bumblebees and wasps. Others are carefully thinning their forest stands to improve habitat for the tiny dwarf lake iris, found nowhere but near the shores of the Great Lakes.

Landowners and the agencies keep in touch through a bi-annual newsletter, and landowners often



Resting place. An endangered Karner blue butterfly finds a perch atop a butterfly weed. Photo by Ann Swengel.

invite Service and state biologists to stop by their property to check on a rare species' progress.

Many, like Welch, go above and beyond the call of duty. "My philosophy is that you're only here for your lifetime so we are really just

stewards of the resource," he said. "Sometimes, private ownership can be more effective than public ownership. We can do things that agencies cannot."

—Joan Guilfoyle, Public Affairs, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Anglers' Dollars Help Open Kansas Fishing Hot Spot

Kansas' newest fishing hole, the 5,100-acre Wolf Creek Lake, opened with a bang this fall as Kansas Governor Bill Graves joined federal and state wildlife officials, officers of the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation, school kids, Kansas City Chiefs football players, and a host of media at a ceremony on its banks.

Anglers visiting the lake will benefit from a five-lane concrete boat ramp, sturdy docks, a large fenced parking lot and sparkling new restrooms constructed with a \$600,000 Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration grant awarded to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks by the Service.

"This was a classic example of making the most of anglers' dollars," said Region 6 Federal Aid Coordinator Mary Gessner. "The Wolf Creek Corporation provided the lake, the Service worked with



Going fishing. Kansas Governor Bill Graves joins Region 6 Federal Aid Coordinator Mary Gessner, Service Public Affairs Chief Phil Million, and Secretary of Kansas Wildlife and Parks Steve Williams at the spanking new boating access facilities opened at Wolf Creek Lake. Photo by Dick Clark.

Kansas Wildlife and Parks to fund construction and Coffey County built a new access road to the lake from the main highway. The result is a really first-rate facility for the fishing and boating public."

The large crowd attending the media event spoke volumes about the importance of fishing to midwesterners. Wolf Creek Lake was filled in 1980 and stocked with a high density of predator fish to control gizzard shad.

Unfished since its construction, the lake features excellent populations of largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappie, walleye, channel catfish and striped bass/white bass hybrids known as "wipers." Fishing at the lake will be limited to 50 boats and 50 shore anglers a day admitted by permit, and fish harvest will be tightly controlled to maintain a high-quality fishery. 🐟

Big Muddy Refuge: A Glimpse of the Missouri's Past

When Lewis and Clark explored the Missouri River in the early 19th century, they found a wild river meandering back and forth within its floodplain, scouring holes, depositing silt and creating channels, islands and other natural features. The river provided lush habitat for a variety of species of fish and wildlife.

Today the Missouri is a much different river: dredged, channelized, and contained within levees designed to make it easier for navigation and prevent annual flooding of the farmland along its banks. Unfortunately, what has made the river better for navigation

and farming has had a disastrous effect on native wildlife.

Trapped within levees, the river is now no longer connected to its floodplain and does not feed riparian wetlands and bottomlands once abundant in wildlife. Biologists estimate that since 1912, more than half a million acres of wildlife habitat have been lost in the Lower Missouri River basin, resulting in a precipitous decline in native species of birds, mammals, fish and other wildlife.

The old Missouri cannot be recreated, but the Service hopes to provide modern-day explorers glimpses of the untamed, wildlife-



Big Muddy Inspection. J.C. Bryant, refuge manager at Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Missouri, surveys last spring's flood damage along the river. Photo by Jim Milligan.

laden river of two centuries ago.

After the devastating flood of 1993, the Service established Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge to restore some of the natural function of the Missouri and recapture some of its rich wildlife heritage. In particular, emergency flood monies were used to purchase flood-damaged farmland along the river from willing sellers.

To date, the Service has acquired 2,100 acres in a series of parcels along the lower Missouri out of a total of 20,000 acres authorized for the refuge. A pending environmental impact statement proposes expanding the refuge to 60,000 acres, again in various

parcels along the river.

Refuge manager J.C. Bryant said he is determined to bring back some of the native species that once thrived on the Missouri. The refuge will provide a few places where waterfowl, neotropical birds, the endangered pallid sturgeon and other native fish can thrive, and where visitors can see what Lewis and Clark saw, Bryant said.

This may mean removing or not rebuilding levees and letting the river run free.

"What we're trying to do is give the river a few places along its course to act like a river without causing problems for our neighbors," he said. 



A helping hand. John Moran, a student at the Service's Mingo Job Corps Center near Puxico, Missouri, teaches fishing technique to Marshall Daniels, a resident with the state's mental health program. Ten students from the center took part in "Make a Difference Day," sponsored by USA Weekend Magazine in October, by helping residents bait hooks, cast and reel in fish at a catfish farm where everyone was sure to catch a fish. "I realized that helping others is a good thing and rewarding," said Moran. "It made me feel good and helpful. At one point, I felt needed." Photo by Ricky McLean.



Partnership in Education. Acting Director John Rogers, left, presents a Duck Stamp print to Dr. Kay Davis, the director of Atlanta's Fernbank Museum of Natural History, after signing an agreement with the museum to promote wetlands conservation. The museum is building a wetland exhibit to educate the public about wetlands. National wildlife refuges throughout the Southeast will contribute to the exhibit, which will be seen by more than 750,000 visitors a year. Standing to the right are Southeast Regional Director Noreen Clough and Jesse S. Hall, the museum's vice chairman.

Service's Corporate Stewardship Award Presented to Champion International

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt presented Champion International Corporation of Stamford, Connecticut, with the Service's Corporate Stewardship Award in December in recognition of the company's outstanding contributions to fish and wildlife conservation.

"Wherever Champion has a presence, it has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its counterpart state agencies to develop solutions that protect wildlife and allow land use," Babbitt said. "Champion has shown that we can use our lands while protecting our natural heritage."

Champion has supported a wide range of activities designed to protect endangered and threatened species and their habitats over the past several years, including adopting specialized land management techniques that benefit birds and fish and educational programs for its employees and contractors.

In 1994, Champion signed a cooperative agreement with the Service, the Forest Service, and the state of Texas under which Champion manages 2,000 acres of its Brushy Creek Wildlife Management Area in east Texas to protect existing woodpecker colonies and to provide additional nesting habitat for transplanted woodpeckers. The corporation has also built and installed artificial nesting cavities, conducted prescribed burns, and established open stands of longleaf pine to benefit the woodpecker.

In its role as one of Maine's major forest landowners, Champion helped establish the Salmon Habitat and River Enhancement Project. The project has become a focal point in developing cooperative solutions to declining runs of Atlantic salmon. As part of this effort, Champion contributed funds, personnel and equipment to map salmon habitat, clear obstacles to spawning, repair water control structures, and build and tend weirs to track returning fish.

Champion has also worked with the Service to arrange or fund



Salmon haven. Holmes Falls, a scenic stretch of the Machias River in eastern Maine, is one of many places conserved under Champion International Corporation's *Special Places in the Forest* program. The river serves as an important spawning ground and nursery for Atlantic salmon and brook trout. Photo courtesy of Champion.

endangered species training for its contract loggers. In addition, the company has produced an illustrated guidebook to endangered species in Alabama and developed a series of educational video tapes about endangered species in the South. Because of the success of these ongoing efforts, Champion is developing endangered species guidebooks for each of the 17 states in which it operates.

Champion is the eighth company to receive the Service's Corporate Wildlife Stewardship Award since it was created in 1990.



Move over Elvis. Fifteen endangered species made their debut on U.S. Postage Stamps this fall. The 32-cent stamps are based on photographs taken by world-renowned nature photographer James Balog. The 15 include: the black-footed ferret, thick-billed parrot, Hawaiian monk seal, American crocodile, ocelot, Schaus swallowtail butterfly, Wyoming toad, brown pelican, California condor, Gila trout, San Francisco garter snake, Woodland caribou, Florida panther, piping plover and Florida manatee.

Acting Director's Corner

The Importance of Reaching Out

The release of California condors in Arizona in December attracted a lot of media attention and was certainly one of the Service's highlights for 1996. But the release also illustrated that even with our long and distinguished history of wildlife conservation, the Service is still very much a work in progress. We continue to evolve, to take on new challenges, and to seek new ways of carrying out our mission.



One of the most significant aspects of this transformation is our growing focus on reaching out to the public and our constituent groups to involve them in our decisions and activities. "Outreach" is fast becoming a pillar of our organizational culture.

The term covers a lot of ground from special events like National Wildlife Refuge Week and International Migratory Bird Day to the formation of federally chartered advisory groups such as the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council to efforts to work with private and corporate landowners to improving our skills and abilities to communicate more clearly and consistently and to work with the media more effectively. In the future, we will need to expand our outreach efforts even more as we continue to implement the ecosystem approach and ecosystem teams continue to expand the array of partners with whom we work.

I am pleased to see the Service is nearing the point where outreach is sufficiently ingrained in our management culture that we automatically include it as a factor in key decisions. This is good because when we think about outreach only in the 11th hour of a project, or worse not at all, we invite misunderstanding and opposition. On the other hand, when we explain ourselves, we usually engender greater public support.

The reintroduction of California condors to Arizona showed how outreach can make a critical difference. At first, the reintroduction faced stiff opposition from local landowners fearful of additional government regulation. The Service held a number of public meetings to discuss the reintroduction with citizens in the release area and carefully explained every detail of the project to other federal and state agencies and the media.

As a result, when the condors were finally released, even local critics of the reintroduction were quoted in the media as being at least cautiously supportive of the return of these great birds to Arizona skies. Equally important to note is the type of outreach that brought Senator Frank Lautenberg to New Jersey bat cave (see the story in this issue).

This is the kind of payoff in public understanding and support that is fast making outreach one of our most valuable conservation tools. I am delighted we are making more and more use of it.

John Rogers

Around the Service

- Construction will soon begin on the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The center is a \$3 million joint venture partnership, with construction funded by the state and operations handled by the Service. It will be a residential learning facility with a primary mission of educating students and the general public about the importance of prairie wetlands, tallgrass prairie and their inhabitants.

- Eight coordinators of the Earth Stewards program, an educational outreach pilot effort to link Service field offices with neighborhood schools, recently received awards from the National Education and Training Center for their work. They are: Denise Dachner, Sacramento NWR Complex; Jamin Thomas, Midwest Science Center; Rhonda Davis, National Wetlands Research Center; Terri Edwards, Office of Subsistence Management, Region 7; Marilyn Gamette, Sacramento NWR Complex; Angela Tracy, New Jersey Field Office; Cathy Rezabek, Office of Subsistence Management, Region 7; and Sue Robinson, New Jersey Field Office.

- In one of the nation's largest capital improvement projects to be completed with Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds, the Missouri Department of Conservation will receive a total of \$15 million over the next six years to construct the Lost Valley State Fish Hatchery. Total cost of the project, located near the central Missouri town of Warsaw, is estimated at \$20 million.

- Region 3 received a Certificate of Commendation from Minnesota Governor Arne H. Carlson for its work in developing Minnesota's portion of the digital National Wetlands Inventory.

- Karen Smith, manager of Lostwood NWR in North Dakota, and Robert Murphy, wildlife biologist at the Des Lacs NWR Complex in North Dakota, received a 1996 Stewardship Award from "Partners In Flight," an international partnership created to promote understanding about neotropical migrant birds. The two were honored for their work in restoring native prairie habitat.



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