**Fall 2018** 

# THE WILDSIDE

A newsletter for the supporters of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge







MEET SUSAN WHITE: THE NEW REFUGE MANAGER

THE IWRA BENEFIT DINNER RECAP



### ABQUT DRIWR G. IWRA





The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) is located along the lower Detroit River and western shoreline of Lake Erie. Established in 2001 as the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America, it includes islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands along 48 miles of shoreline. Its unique location in a large urban area allowssignificant opportunities for the public to experience fish, wildlife and plants in their natural babitat

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization- a "Friends" organization that works to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the development of the DRIWR. We invite you to become a supporter of IWRA.

Visit iwralliance.org, www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit\_river and www.drhawkwatch.org for more periodic updates

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Alexa Blankenship • Biological Technician

Jessica Fransted • Biological Technician

Vince Ziols • Public Lands Transportation Fellow

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### A Message from the Alliance Chair

Our Community has benefited from the conservation minded efforts of John D. Dingell, former member of Congress and Dr. John H. Hartig, Fulbright Scholar. Now, it is our turn to ensure that their efforts are rewarded by creating a Trust Fund for the future of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge as a Legacy for those generations that follow.

Richard G. Micka, Chair International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board

## IWRA is honored to share in your passion for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and in developing the next generation of conservationists.

As we move forward with the opening of the John D. Dingell Visitor Center and the Korneffel Pier in the Refuge Gateway we realize the need to sustain these comes with a price. Hence, the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance has established the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and the Legacy Fund held through the Wealth Management Group of Monroe Bank & Trust.

The primary purpose of the endowment is operate, maintain, and program the Visitor Center, Refuge Gateway, and Humbug Marsh Unit as part of a commitment to provide a quality public use and conservation experience.

Considerable funds are needed to operate, maintain, and program the Visitor Center, boat dock and fishing pier, trails, environmental education shelter, etc. with quality. This includes cleaning, utilities, snow removal, grass cutting and native plant maintenance, repairs (as needed), programming, etc. Our goal is to provide an exceptional conservation and outdoor recreational experience that inspires the next generation of conservationists. This endowment helps protect our initial investment (land acquisition, restoration work, the building) and ensures a long-term mechanism to operate, maintain, and program these facilities and habitats. The secondary purpose of the endowment is to help operate, maintain, and program other units of the refuge.

It is our priority to consistently provide a quality conservation and outdoor recreational experience at the Refuge Gateway and Humbug Marsh Unit and the endowment will manifest our commitment.

It's never too early for a year-end tax deductible donation in support of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge! Donations can be mailed in the envelope provided in this issue of The WILDSIDE newsletter and mailed to: IWRA, 9311 Groh Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138 or through the IWRA website: http://www.iwralliance.org.

Please contact Joann Van Aken

**Executive Director** 

(734-692-7671 / iwr\_alliance@yahoo.com), Don Skidmore,

**Chairman Endowment Fund Committee** (734-624-9317 / naturalistdon17@gmail.com) or Tom Byrne

Campaign Development Director (810-338-2879 / tmbyrne@greatlakes.net) with any questions.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing you in the Refuge.



### **Introducing Susan White, Refuge Manager**

### Hoʻi ka pō ai i ka piko : The Circle Returns to its Source

In July, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge welcomed Susan White in her new role as the Refuge Manager. Susan grew up in metro-Detroit and graduated from Central Michigan University; now she is continuing her journey as a circle returning to its source. After teaching in Michigan for a short time, Susan's career in conservation and management of protected areas began in 1989 at the Saba National Marine Park in the Dutch Caribbean. In 1997, she started working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex as a Marine Resource Biologist. From 2000-2002, Susan served as the National Coral Reef and Marine Protected Areas Coordinator at USFWS Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Next, she returned to Florida as the Deputy Project Leader at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, welcoming innovative partnerships and nearly a million visitors a year. Susan gathered valuable agency experience from 2005-2007 in the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta as Assistant Refuge Area Supervisor for 46 refuges in Florida, Mississippi, and southern Alabama.

Susan then spent 2007 through 2018 in Hawai`i, where she became the first USFWS Superintendent of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site. As the Project Leader of Pacific Reefs National Wildlife Refuge and Monuments Complex, she oversaw management of the Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll, and Marianas Trench Marine National Monuments, and their 10 National Wildlife Refuges. Susan's most recent role in the Pacific was Monuments' Supervisor for the 4 Marine National Monuments, leading and coordinating management of more than 756 million acres of ocean, islands, and atolls in the Pacific Ocean. Her conservation focuses at these Refuges and Monuments included more than 23 million seabirds, vast coral reefs, 26 threatened or endangered species and their habitats, sacred cultural sites, iconic World War II historic resources, as well as supporting the perpetuation of indigenous cultures and traditions of Oceania.

Susan's career has granted her some amazing experiences.

She has awesome stories and is eager to tell them! Midway Atoll in Papahānaumokuākea is one of the most interesting place she visited, where a rich iconic history and sacred cultural importance combine with the largest colony of albatross in the world. Ask her about commemorating the Battle of Midway with veterans who were there, or guiding President Barack Obama in a snorkeling excursion, or about the time she worked with Titanic director James Cameron to permit his historic expedition to the bottom of Marianas Trench. Her admiration and passion for the Hawaiian people and aloha- having compassion, peace, and caring, for those around you, and everything, with respect and love - is visible and in her character and conversations.

After experiencing these wondrous places, how could the Detroit River and Lake Erie possibly relate? Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has something essential to conservation that you'd be hard pressed to find with the Remote Pacific Island Refuges: a broad and diverse urban community of people who are an integral part of the Refuge. Susan looks forward to the connections with neighbors and friends who see the Refuge as a place welcoming to both wildlife and people. Our community – people, businesses, and partners who realize that what the Refuge brings in conserving and restoring these waters and lands brings benefits to them as well. One mission of the Refuge is to aid people in becoming comfortable and connected to the natural world that is right in their own backyard. Susan has missed the ability to see the light bulb come on in a child's face as they pick up a bug and realize it won't hurt them. This is a special place, and the community is such an important part of it!

While she is excited to be home and ready to jump in, Susan learned a lot from her travels that she hopes to share at DRIWR. On her first day she taught the staff the Hawaiian phrase of our kuleana to mālama āina- We have the privilege of being responsible for and caring for the land. DRIWR's staff and volunteers surely will not take that privilege for granted. Susan is eager to support the people who love this Refuge, Southeast Michigan, and the Great Lakes; and the revitalization of these places and the community.

So, if you see Susan around, make sure to say Aloha! We are lucky to have her join us at DRIWR and cannot wait to watch her journey come full circle: returning to its source.



Susan at Midway Atoll Refuge in Papahānaumokuākea MNM with the albatross colony.



Susan with director James Cameron by his submersible Deepsea Challenger before his historic dive into Marianas Trench in 2012.



Diving with past FWS Director Dan Ashe at Palmyra Atoll NWR in Pacific Remote Islands MNM.

### Introducing our New Wildlife Biologist Jessie Fletcher

I grew up in Troy, Michigan with my parents and a menagerie of dogs and cats. I met my husband (a native Michigander) at the University of Michigan Biological Station during a forest ecology course. We both share a love of the outdoors and have taught each other new things; in the spring, he takes me kayak fishing for smallmouth bass while I point out the migrating warblers as we paddle. We have spent the last five years together fishing, birding, and working outside of our home state with the ultimate goal of moving back to southeastern Michigan to be with our families.

After graduating from U of M, my first job with FWS was at Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge in southern Indiana. I spent the summer walking through dense thickets of multiflora rose and honeysuckle to inventory and monitor invasive plant species threatening the refuge. I worked closely with the refuge biologist and realized that his job was exactly what I wanted in a career.

I spent the next two years pursuing my master's degree in Syracuse, New York at SUNY ESF. I studied habitat use characteristics of northeastern bat species by recording bats echolocating at night while traveling and foraging for food. Beyond the ability to fly, bats are like birds and can often be identified to species by the navigational echolocation calls that they make. I loved researching these tiny, misunderstood critters, but as I completed my thesis, I started refocusing my attention on my future career.

Last summer, I worked as a Directorate Fellow through the FWS Directorate Fellowship Program at Agassiz NWR in northern Minnesota. As part of this program, I spent 12 weeks conducting research to map the topography of lake bottoms on the refuge and design tools that refuge management uses to anticipate impacts of water level changes. After finishing my degree last winter, I was offered the job at Detroit River IWR and started working in April.

My husband and I are so grateful to be settled back home in the Mitten and look forward to staying put for a good long while! Back in the dense forests of Big Oaks NWR, I never could have imagined working for the only international wildlife refuge in the country and alongside such incredibly motivated and passionate staff and volunteers. I can't wait to see what we accomplish!



### **Alexa Blankenship**

I graduated from Central Michigan University in 2017, and went to work with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), partnering with the US Forest Service to work on a Trail Crew in Chugach National Forest. I then transferred to work with the SCA and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Lower Rio Grande, Santa Ana, and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuges in their Restoration program. Now I am happily back in Michigan, surrounded by my beloved lakes, rivers, and forests, working for Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. I can't wait to see where this adventure takes me.

Alexa at a glance: Hometown: Canton, MI

Favorite Animal: American Bison Favorite Bird: Barn Swallow Favorite Plant: Sugar Maple

Career Goals: Working in conservation management, with any of the wildlife, invasive, or ecology divisions. Favorite thing about DRIWR: "We are one of the very few urban refuges in the country, meaning we have a very rare opportunity to really connect with our community, and teach them the importance of natural areas and conservation. Also, seeing the wildlife returning to and using the refuge land after all the hard work returning the land to its natural state."

### **Meet the New Invasive Species Technicians!**





### **Jessica Fransted**

I grew up in the very small town of Grass Lake, Michigan. After graduating high school, I attended Jackson Community College and earned an associate's degree before transferring to Eastern Michigan University. Originally, I pursued occupational therapy but a quick job shadow and a few health classes changed my mind. After dropping my health classes, the only course available was in environmental studies.

Reluctantly, I signed up for it and fell in love.
I graduated from EMU in December 2017 with a bachelor degree in environmental biology. I have worked on a stewardship team, performed tundra research in the Arctic Circle, and created numerous environmental education programs.

As a biotech, I hope to gain perspective and experience that will help guide me towards a happy and fulfilling career.



### **2018 Friend of the Refuge Awards**

On Tuesday, April 17th at Gibraltar City Hall, the John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Awards were given in recognition of leadership and dedication to conservation on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie Basin. This year's honorees were:

### Richard E. Mills (Individual Award)

Richard Mills is a native of California and moved to Michigan in 1969, where he now lives with his wife, Cheryl. Mr. Mills is well known in the Downriver area for his fencing and woodworking skills with a career spanning over 40 years. Prior to his retirement, Richard owned and operated Custom Wood & Vinyl Fencing in Riverview. He also established Logs to Lumber & Beyond which provided a portable sawmill service and artistic furniture building.

Richard has built award-winning furniture, including a custom rocking chair for former Congressman John D. Dingell.

Richard has been active with Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) for over ten years, beginning with building the short boardwalk near the Humbug Marsh Education Shelter. Since then, his contributions include helping build two observation decks at the Gibraltar Bay Unit, the Walnut Grove observation deck at Humbug Marsh the eagle nest observation platform at Humbug Marsh and several benches for the Humbug Marsh Education Shelter. He has also provided materials and expertise for many other projects and has donated beautiful furniture pieces for the silent auction at IWRA's Annual Benefit Dinner. Some of his furniture will also be featured in the observation room of the new Visitor Center.



IWRA Chair Richard Micka, Deputy District Director Michael Klotz (representing Congresswoman Debbie Dingell and John Dingell), Richard and Cheryl Mills, and IWRA Executive Director Joann Van Aken. The 2018 Friend of the Refuge Individual Award was presented to Mr. Richard Mills on Tuesday, April 17 at Gibraltar City Hall. Photo: Mark Messer

Richard is always available to share his knowledge and brainstorm ideas to ensure a project is successful. Richard Mills has helped to make the Refuge a more welcoming and accessible destination for all. DRIWR and IWRA are pleased to call him a partner, but more importantly, a friend!

### The Nature Conservancy (Non-Profit Award)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was founded in 1951 as a global conservation non-profit organization. The mission of TNC is to "conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends." Their efforts impact conservation in all 50 states and 72 countries around the world. The Nature Conservancy works with landowners and other partners to protect natural areas and managing 20 preserves in Michigan, including Erie Marsh Preserve. Erie Marsh Preserve is one of the southernmost units within the DRIWR acquisition boundary, where it is cooperatively managed by TNC, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other partners.

Erie Marsh Preserve contains 11% of the wetlands in Southeast Michigan. It is critical habitat for migratory birds, and two state-threatened plants: American lotus and swamp rose-mallow. The unit is currently part of a large wetland construction and restoration project that will restore hydrologic connection to Lake Erie and improve water management capabilities. This project will increase biodiversity, provide better habitat for wildlife, and aid in management of invasive species.

The Nature Conservancy is also a partner in the Detroit River-Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)- a team of 13 organizations including DRIWR and IWRA that work together to effectively manage invasive plants in natural areas.



IWRA Chair Richard Micka, Deputy District Director Michael Klotz (representing Congresswoman Debbie Dingell and John Dingell), TNC Restoration Director Chris May, IWRA Executive Director Joann Van Aken, and TNC Associate State Director Patrick Doran. The 2018 Friend of the Refuge Non-Profit Award was presented to The Nature Conservancy on Tuesday, April 17 at Gibraltar City Hall. Photo: Mark Messer

TNC Restoration Director Chris May, is the CWMA chair and has been crucial to the success of this program in advising, grant writing and sharing resources. TNC provided financial and technical support to the Refuge leading to land acquisitions and habitat restoration. Without TNC's involvement, DRIWR would struggle to fund biological technicians, have fewer resources to combat invasive species, and have fewer acres of protected land.



### Thank You To Our 2018 Sponsors and Auction Donors!

On Saturday, April 21, 2018, the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance celebrated another successful year of dedication to the Refuge with its 13th Annual Benefit Dinner at The Bentley Banquet & Conference Center in Wyandotte. 380 friends in conservation enjoyed dinner, entertainment, auctions, and raffles during the sold-out event. It is with their generous donations IWRA can continue to support the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in their mission of conservation and management of wildlife habitat. On behalf of IWRA, thank you to all who joined us; we hope you had as much fun as we did!

### Eagle BASF DTE Energy

**American Lotus Consumers Energy** 

### Heron ITC Holdings

### Muskrat

Beaumont Hospital-Trenton John & Theresa Cullen DTE Energy Foundation Eastman Chemical Orin Gelderloos Family of Elmer Gonyea Mans Lumber & Millwork Richard & Jeanne Micka Richard & Cheryl Mills Monroe Bank & Trust Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival Richard & Sue Skoglund

### Mallard

By Design Graphic Arts John & Mancy Colina Ducks Unlimited Lake Erie Adventures La-Z-Boy, Inc Mannik & Smith Group Timothy Marschner Waltraud Prechter **Trenton Business Association WCCC** District



**BASF** Bay Sail - Appledore Tall Ships Black Rock Bar & Grill James & Karen Boase Mary Bohling Denis Boismier Tim & Tammy Bowman Tennie Braatz joe Bellino - Broadway Market Doug Chaffin Laurie Champagne John & Theresa Cullen DTE Energy Detroit History Tours Detroit Red Wings Detroit Rolling Pub Detroit Tigers Marika Diamond EmbroidMe Flowers on the Avenue Gary Dawson Gibraltar Bay Alpacas Grosse Ile Pet & Garden Center Joann Gonvea Élizabeth Íszler **IWRA** Jim's Hair Corral Gary R. Kirsh Brian & Nicole LaFleur Lake Erie Adventures Michigan DNR Michigan Pedaler Richard and Jeanne Micka ision Center Bank & Trust Shauna Nietubicz Carol Parent

**Pewabic Pottery** Donald Skidmore Richard & Sue Skoglund Patricia Smart Carl & Candace Sterling Thorne Brothers at Lilac Golf Course Trenton Parks and Recreation Trenton Summer Festival Committee Two James Spirits Roberta Urbani Joann and Joel Van Aken Wayne County Parks West Marine Dick Whitwam Vicky Eberly: Wines for Humanity







### Save the Date for the 14th Annual Benefit Dinner: Saturday, April 6, 2019

We will be returning to The Bentley Banquet & Conference Center 646 Biddle Avenue, Wyandotte, MI

EARLY BIRD Registration -- Dinner reservations now being accepted! 2018's event had a Sold-Out crowd of 380 people - it's never too early to make your reservation! We look forward to seeing you in April!



Photo credits:

Mark Messer



### **Learn a Little About the Alpena FWCO Programs Stationed at Detroit River!**

#### **Native Species Crew**

"How are the Lake Sturgeon doing?" "Is the Walleye fishing any good right now?" "Where are those reefs that were put out there?" These are just a few of the questions that the native species crew can help answer.

Justin Chiotti, Jennifer Johnson, Paige Wigren, and Aaron Mettler make up the native species crew, and they collect data focused on threatened and endangered species and evaluating habitat enhancement projects. Lake Sturgeon population demographics are monitored from the St. Clair-Detroit River System into western Lake Erie.

### **Early Detection Monitoring Crew**

Greg Wright, Jess Bowser, Janine Lajavic, and Jason Kaitchuck work from DRIWR with the Alpena office and other partners in the prevention of new non-native species from establishing in the Great Lakes, connecting channels, and tributaries. Early detection maximizes the probability that these introductions can be contained and where possible, eradicated.

REMINDER: Always wash off boat and gear between different waters, throw out bait, DON'T dump, and NEVER release your pets!

#### **Grass Carp Crew**

The most common question we are asked while out in the field is: "Are Asian carp in the Great Lakes yet"? People are usually referring to Silver Carp – the fish known to jump out of the water – but there are three other species of Asian carp: Grass Carp, Bighead Carp, and Black Carp. Only Grass Carp are presently found in the Great Lakes. The crew, comprised of Ryan Young, Jesse McCarter and Jordan McKenna, perform the monitoring and control of Grass Carp populations in Lake Erie from the Ohio-Pennsylvania border up to northern Lake Huron.



Detroit River Substation Manager/Fish Biologist Jim Boase and Aaron Mettler hold young Lake Sturgeon.





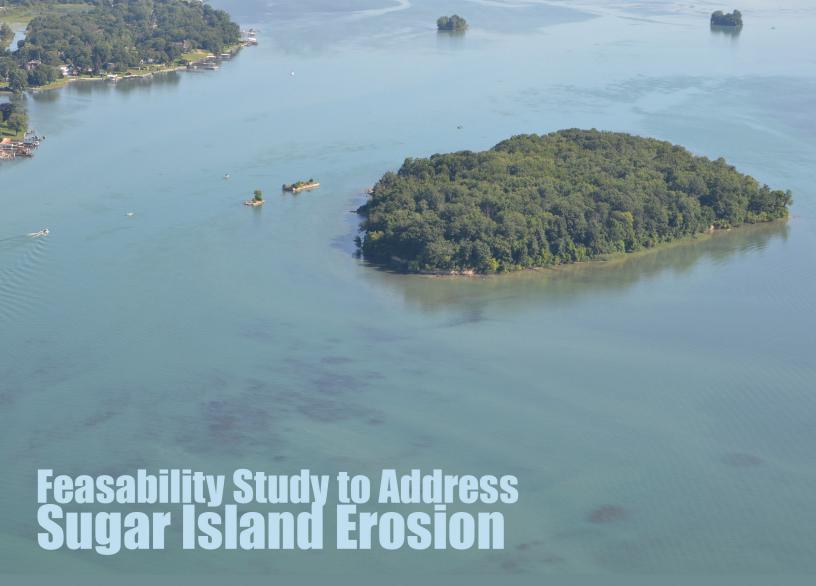
Janine Lajavic and Ryan Young hold fish captured while electrofishing. Photo: USFWS



Jesse McCarter working with minnow traps on the electrofishing boat. Photo: USFWS



Jason Kaitchuck holds a big musky. Photo: USFWS



Sugar Island may be one of the Refuge's newer management units, but the island and its unique history have been famous in the local community for long before it was acquired in 2012. In the early 1900s, people were ferried to Sugar Island to enjoy the amusement park and dance pavilion. Today, beach goers and boaters can take a break and enjoy the shade and birds singing on the western beach. Despite a modest abundance of flora and fauna, the island is relatively small and, over the last few years, getting smaller. Since 1937, the total area of Sugar Island has reduced from 34 acres to 28 acres, likely due to erosion.

To protect this valuable resource, the Friends of the Detroit River and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have partnered together under a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in a joint effort to restore and improve the habitat on Sugar Island. This summer kicked off the habitat restoration feasibility and preliminary design study conducted by the professional consulting firm SmithGroup JJR. The study will look at a variety of characteristics potentially impacting erosion including riverbed sediment, shoreline geology, and river flow around the island. Statistical models will be used to evaluate these variables and their relative impact on the structural integrity of the island.

Aside from physical features of the Island, this study has been designed to analyze the wildlife on the island and surrounding waters. The habitat on Sugar Island is wet-mesic flatwoods; a forest community characterized by an overstory of oaks, maples, and hickories growing on poorly drained soils. These communities are relatively rare and of special interest to USFWS. However, much of the understory is made up of invasive plant species like privet and lilac, which were originally planted as ornamentals. These plants can prevent typical wet-mesic flatwoods plants from thriving.

The feasibility analysis portion of the project is nearly complete and preliminary restoration strategies are being explored. This work is expected to conclude in November 2018. At that time, SmithGroup JJR will present their analysis of the factors affecting soil erosion and provide ideas for preventing further shoreline loss, along with strategies to enhance fish and wildlife habitat on and surrounding the island.

Concrete blocks where boats dropped off guests still sit in the river on the western shore of the island. Today, those blocks serve little purpose except to the few geese that choose to nest there every spring and to remind us of the island's history and look forward to its future. Stay tuned for updates as the project progresses!

### Merit Badges Can Be Fun To Earn! Jennie Braatz

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge joined forces with Wayne County Community College District to offer the Nature and Fish and Wildlife Management merit badges to local Scouts.

The last week of June, refuge staff and volunteers offered two badges in three days. Scouts had the opportunity to build a wildlife blind, observe all types of wildlife, fish, make nature journals, and participate in other nature related activities.

The partnership with the community college has been beneficial to the refuge as it has allowed new opportunities and collaborative work between the two partners. The Merit Badge Camp will be an annual event, eventually moving to the refuge. Staff had a blast and cannot wait for the next camp!





### **Meet Vince Ziols Transportation Fellow**

Vince Ziols' assignment as the transportation fellow with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) will be to improve access to the DRIWR by utilizing alternative modes of transportation, such as bike and pedestrian access.

He will achieve this by creating a 5-year Transportation Status Report, reaching out to stakeholders throughout the region to support and regionally promote the public amenities of the refuge. Vince earned his Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Dayton and a Master of Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Some of his past work consisted of placemaking initiatives in urban communities, creation of equitable transportation plans for the far south side of Chicago, assisting small businesses become more sustainable, research into reducing urban waste (especially reduction of food waste by compost systems), and organizing a network of stewards and community groups to care for and utilize urban wildlife habitats.



### Migration Highway is Open! By Jerry Jourdan

The Detroit River Hawk Watch has begun its 36th year of monitoring raptor migration on September 1st, 2018. Kevin Georg will lead a group of volunteer hawk watchers as they begin to monitor the daily passage of turkey vultures, hawks, eagles, and falcons as they make their way from their breeding grounds in Eastern Canada to wintering grounds in Mexico. With its location at the Lake Erie Metropark Boat Launch in Gibraltar, Michigan, Detroit River Hawk Watch is an ideal setting for counting tens of thousands of raptors each fall between September 1st and November 30th. Daily totals are reported to Hawk Count, which is a database supported by the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) that helps to build a raptor population index (RPI) to monitor species health and population trends.

Geography, thermals, and weather are the keys to the success of our annual hawk counts. Raptors migrating south from Eastern Canada are "blocked" by the waters of the Georgian Bay and the Great Lakes where thermals (columns of rising air caused by heating of the earth by the sun) disappear, thus forcing them to expend valuable energy by flapping their wings as opposed to soaring on thermals. They are directed south and east around Lakes Ontario and Erie until they are funneled to the mouth of the Detroit River where they are forced to cross the 4-mile span separating Canada from the United States. Lake Erie Metropark is situated at the narrowest gap of this span, so counters are able to monitor raptor crossings as they lose altitude over open water. On days when light winds are coming from the north, skies are clear, and humidity is low, counters can expect to see up to tens of thousands of raptors in a single day!

The Detroit River is one of the top hawk watch sites in North America for monitoring raptor migration during the fall months. In 2017, a total of 72,263 turkey vultures and 15 species of raptor were counted between September 1 and November 30. These numbers were low when compared to our 30-year average of 126,000 raptors. In 2014 we counted over 266,000 raptors during the same months!

#### **Weather is key!**

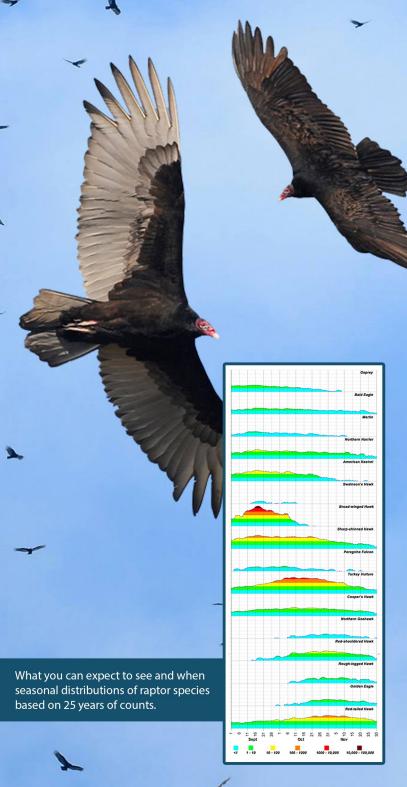
September is the month of Broad-winged Hawks. During the 2nd and 3rd weeks of September as many as 10,000 Broad-winged Hawks can be counted in a single day. In 1999, a staggering 543,533 Broad-winged Hawks were counted on September 17 by legendary hawk watchers Jeff Schultz, Tim Smart, and Vic Berardi when weather conditions were perfect for a migration storm! For this reason, the annual Hawkfest Festival at Lake Erie Metropark is scheduled to coincide with the peak of the Broad-winged Hawk migration. September is also the peak month for counting Sharp-shinned Hawks, and the first of many turkey vultures to be seen.

The success of the Detroit River Hawk Watch would not be possible without the dedication of Volunteers who log hundreds of hours counting hawks in all weather conditions. Visitors are welcome at the Boat Launch at Lake Erie Metropark and are urged to participate and become volunteers. Don't hesitate to speak with the counters and let them share their most recent sightings and knowledge regarding the hawk migration. Success of the count would also not be possible without the financial and site support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, HMANA, and the Huron Clinton Metroparks.

Keep looking up!



Volunteer Raptor counters keep their eyes on the skies at Lake Erie Metropark boat launch during Hawkwatch Photo: Jerry Jourdan







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