

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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March 2014



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Youth in the Great Outdoors

2013 Annual Report



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Youth in the Great Outdoors

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe with Youth Conservation Corps students.

Executive Summary

Sally Jewell officially took office as the 51st Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI) on April 12, 2013. As did her predecessor, Secretary Salazar, Jewel made engagement of the nation's youth a departmental priority. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Youth in the Great Outdoors (YGO) initiative continues to be a critical strategy for achieving the agency's mission.

The Service succeeded in reaching a significant number of youth with opportunities to play, learn, serve, and work in the outdoors in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. The year posed many challenges for the Service and the YGO initiative. Uncertainties associated with budget sequestration and the new Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) student hiring policy reduced the number of youth the

Service reached. Nevertheless, due to diligent planning and foresight, the Service still managed to provide millions of youth with opportunities to play, learn, serve, and work in the outdoors.

This report highlights the work accomplished across the Service, at the field, regional, and national office levels. These are only a small sampling of the Service's efforts to build lifelong conservation stewards. Young people are our nation's future conservation leaders, and youth engagement is critical for the continued stewardship of the natural resources the Service conserves and protects.

Introduction

Secretary Jewell was quick to reinforce her concern for youth in an April 15, 2013 press release issued during her first full day in office. "We have a generation of children growing up without any connection to nature...the Department of the Interior is well positioned to build a deep and enduring connection between the great outdoors and a new generation of Americans..." She further detailed her vision for youth in remarks at the National Press Club on October 31, 2013, when she said, "...we pass along our nation's rich conservation legacy to the next generation—a path forward that includes balanced development and engaging and employing youth on our public lands." In the months since then, Secretary Jewell has identified four key goals for youth programming in the DOI:

1. Play: Develop and/or enhance outdoor recreation partnerships in 50 cities over the next four years to create new, systemic opportunities for outdoor play for more than 10 million young people.
2. Learn: Provide educational opportunities to at least 10 million of the nation's K-12 student population annually. In addition to welcoming students into nature's classroom, we are developing

and strengthening new online education resources to reach more students.

3. Serve: Engage one million volunteers annually on public lands, effectively tripling the numbers currently within the DOI. In order to achieve the volunteer goal, we will place a renewed emphasis on volunteer coordination and management.

4. Work: Develop the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards and ensure our own skilled and diverse workforce. DOI will provide 100,000 work and training opportunities to young people within its bureaus and through public-private partnerships.

This report highlights the key activities underway in the Service in support of the DOI's youth priority and the Service's YGO initiative. While the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) and the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) have the overall lead for YGO within the Service, this report reveals the deep integration throughout all regional and field units, as well as the national program areas.

With NCTC's support for interagency coordination, the Service also plays an important role in integrating the initiative across the entire Department. The Service reaches millions of youth, educators, and families with its programs each year. YGO presents an excellent opportunity to highlight our best efforts, which are critical to the vitality of the agency and the resources we conserve and protect. Key activities include play, learn, serve, work, leadership, coordination, and training.

One of the top priorities of the YGO initiative is to increase the diversity of the youth that play, learn, serve, and work with us. Highlights of diversity programs and activities are showcased in blue sidebars and textboxes.



www.youthgo.gov

PLAY

75.5 million people hunted, fished, observed or photographed wildlife at the Service's national wildlife refuges (NWR) and national fish hatcheries (NFH).

SERVE

In FY 2013, over 43,000 volunteers gave their time to the Service, totaling nearly 1.6 million volunteer hours

WORK

During FY 2013 the Service employed 2,103 youth, ages 15–25, either directly or through partnerships with nonprofit organizations. This represents 67 percent of the 2010 baseline minimum of 3,125 youth requested by the Department.

The Service worked with 93 nonprofit partnership organizations in FY 2013 to employ 777 youth who worked in all 50 states and 3 territories to help achieve resource management goals.

1,326 young people under the age of 30 were employed in permanent and temporary positions.

856 students attending high school, college or vocational schools filled Student Pathways positions with the Service.

470 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) at the Service's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, the NCTC, regional offices, and at Headquarters (HQ) in Arlington, VA.

LEARN

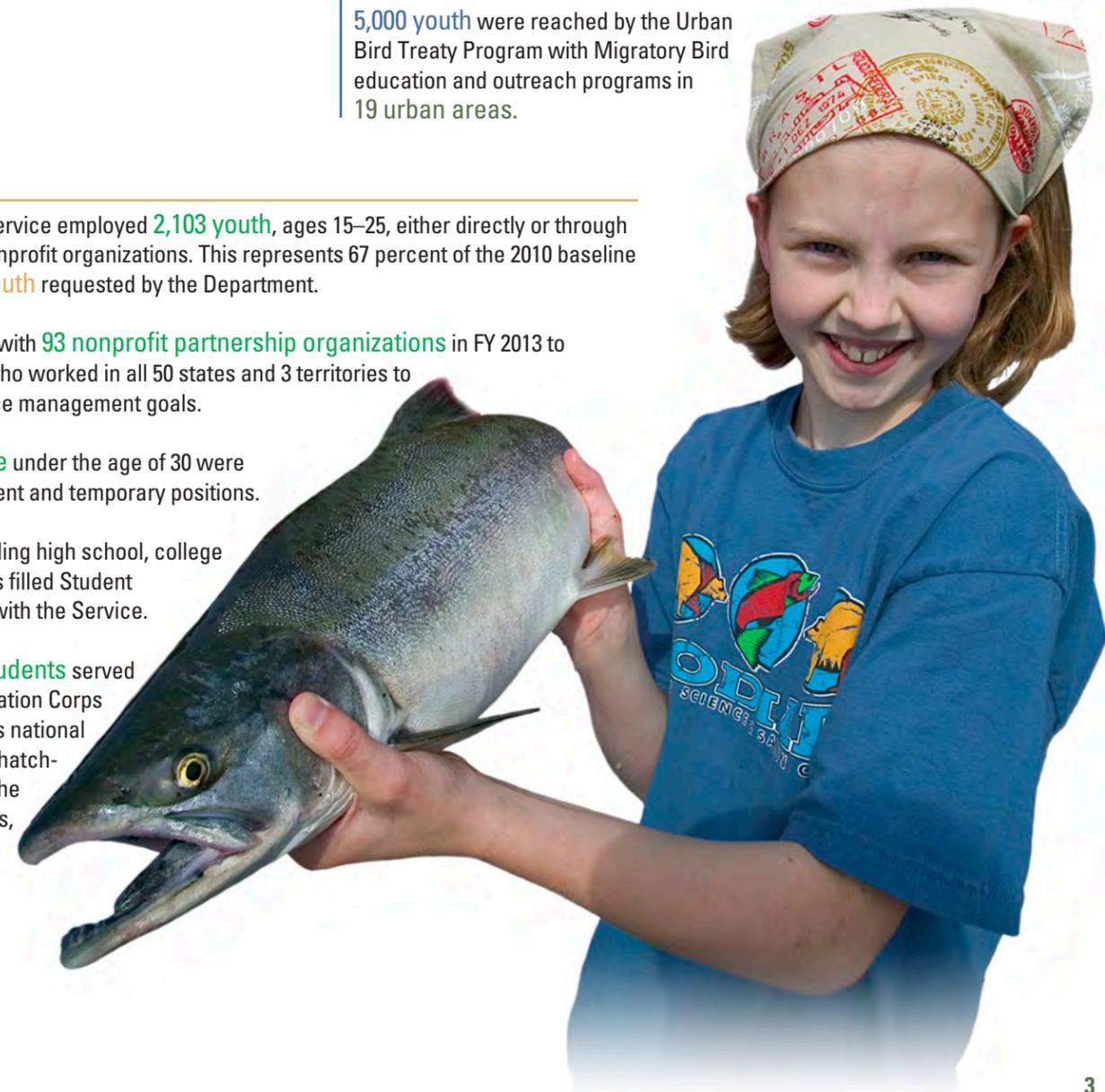
757,000 young people participated in Service environmental education programs focused on the importance of the great outdoors, increasing environmental literacy, and providing opportunities to practice natural and cultural resource stewardship on public lands.

29,465 youth participated in the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school.

Over 10,000 Junior Duck Stamp curriculum guides have been distributed to educators nationwide.

Tens of thousands of students participated in hundreds of new and existing Schoolyard Habitat (SYH) project sites across the country. The program established schoolyard wildlife habitats which are used as outdoor classrooms to teach about the importance of environmental stewardship.

5,000 youth were reached by the Urban Bird Treaty Program with Migratory Bird education and outreach programs in 19 urban areas.





Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

Play:

Developing and enhancing outdoor recreation partnerships that create new and systemic opportunities for outdoor play.

The Service's field stations and partnership programs offer unlimited opportunities for young people to play in the outdoors. From interpretative programs at national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, to schoolyard habitats in over 500 schools nationwide, to outdoor play areas and Nature Explore Classrooms, the Service offers millions of young people playful experiences in the outdoors. Here are a few highlights of those experiences.



Students holding lamprey ammocoete (larva).

Salmon, Streams, and Science

R1 / Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Oregon

Warm Springs NFH hosted over 60 students from the Warm Springs Elementary School in May. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation's Natural Resource Department and Service employees organized the event, "Salmon, Streams, and Science." This was the Tribe's first educational event at the hatchery. The hatchery, which is cooperatively managed by the Service and Tribe, annually raises and releases approximately 750,000 spring chinook salmon. During the event students pretended to be salmon as they learned about the many obstacles and hazards the fish encounter on their amazing journey from the river to the ocean and back in "The Gauntlet." They also mimicked how adult



salmon use their sense of smell to find their way back to their natal streams. They learned anatomy by watching salmon dissections and presentations highlighting live adult and larval Pacific lamprey. The Tribe has strong cultural ties to Pacific lamprey, and for most, holding the lamprey was a new, exciting, and memorable experience.

Student holding adult lamprey.

Bring Your Child to Work Day R2 / Division of Diversity and Civil Rights, Southwest Regional Office, New Mexico

The Southwest Regional Division of Diversity and Civil Rights in conjunction with the Building Urban Community Habitat with Youth project held their annual "Bring Your Child to Work Day." May 2013 marked the first time the Tribe's education event was hosted at the hatchery, which the Service and Tribe cooperatively manage. Held at the Urban Farm in downtown Albuquerque, children, parents, and a few grandparents learned about pollinators, made tie-dyed shirts with natural dyes, created stepping-stones for the garden, and formed seed balls for planting at home. In the garden, children found insects, watched the bees pollinate, and observed the Veterans' work that serves as therapy and helps feed needy families. After lunch, Southwest Regional Director Dr. Benjamin Tuggle discussed the day's events with participants and awarded certificates and prizes.



Tie-dying with natural dyes.



Urban youth from Vista View Elementary School explore the Minnesota River.



Park Ranger Mara Koenig paddles the Minnesota River with urban youth from Vista View Elementary School.

Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures, Partnership Program R3 / Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Minnesota

Through a partnership between Minnesota Valley NWR and the Twin Cities based Wilderness Inquiry (a nonprofit outdoor adventure corporation), Refuge staff accompanied sixth-grade students from Vista View Elementary School as they spent an entire day paddling and exploring the Minnesota River. For many of the 60 participating students, this was their first experience on the water. Wilderness Inquiry provided all the equipment and paddling instructions. After a lunch break on shore, students rotated through three learning stations. They seined for mussels and other aquatic life, learned about early settlers from an interpretive historian, and netted for macro-invertebrates in an effort to assess water quality. As part of the partnership, Wilderness Inquiry uses the Refuge's Bloomington Visitor and Education Center as an inside alternative site for other scheduled field trip groups when the fall weather makes it unsafe to canoe.



Pepper Middle School Learns and Plays R5 / John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Pennsylvania

In a partnership among the Refuge, Pepper Middle School, Pennsylvania Young Birders, Friends of Heinz Refuge, the International Institute for Advanced Instruction, and volunteers, Pepper Middle School students used the Refuge as a living classroom throughout the 2013 school year. On one site visit, despite the wind and cold, over 30 enthusiastic fifth graders went out into the field for birding to find 19 species and 187 birds. In another activity, students learned to fish in partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Youth Anglers and Outdoors program. After learning about pond and stream ecology in the visitor center, the students headed outdoors for instructions on enjoying the outdoors safely and fishing at Darby Creek, including casting and reeling, and the famous attachment of live wriggling worms onto hooks.



Students go birding at John Heinz Refuge.



Youth have fun during site visit to John Heinz Refuge.



Youth learn how to fish at John Heinz Refuge.



Fishing is fun for youth at the John Heinz Refuge.

Prairie Butterfly Garden R6 / South Dakota Ecological Services Office, South Dakota

The Prairie Butterfly Garden is located within the Oahe Downstream Recreation Area, a popular state park close to the South Dakota State Capital. This year, over 500 students raised and transplanted native plants to establish the garden. Students will continue to maintain the site, which will introduce children to outdoor play and cultivate a connection to the natural world. The Great Plains have seen drastic changes in the loss of native prairie, and a walk through the garden provides visitors with up-close experiences with increasingly rare plants and pollinators. The garden also demonstrates how seeds become plants, and how plants are used by wildlife. Onsite display boards provide information on prairie ecosystems and our website provides downloadable materials to further enrich the experience. Partners include South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, South Dakota State University Extension, and the South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Nature Play at Work R7 / Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, Alaska

The Youth for Habitat in Fairbanks, Alaska worked with seven youth ages 13 -16 to design and build a natural playscape at the city's community center. The playscape design plan required two days of intense research and discussion. The final design incorporated a labyrinth, with living willow tunnels leading to its center. Around the periphery of the labyrinth, the youth incorporated a hill with stepping stones and an area for sledding; a sandbox surrounded with vertical stumps to climb; an obstacle course made of driftwood; and spruce log benches. Youth gained construction skills, learned teamwork, and developed confidence in their abilities to complete a daunting challenge. In addition, they made a permanent improvement to an underserved neighborhood and gave the gift of a safe and natural outdoor experience to other children. See photo page 8.

Children planting the Butterfly Garden in Pierre, SD.

Photo credit: Laurel Devaney

Endangered Species Extravaganza! Engages Latino Families R8 / Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), California

The Refuge's annual after-school community outreach event, "Science Night," aims to engage children and families about environmental conservation from the local, predominantly Latino George Mayne Elementary School. The event, held at the Refuge's Environmental Education Center, highlights the prominent role the Service plays in protecting America's public lands and imperiled species. This year's theme, "Endangered Species Extravaganza!" provided a funhouse of environmental education games, crafts, and prizes to 159 enthusiastic children and their parents. Each activity station inside and outside the building emphasized a local habitat and federally protected plant or animal in the San Francisco Bay Area. The event was made possible with the help of two partner organizations, Youth Science Institute and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, and over a dozen dedicated Service staff, interns, volunteers, and George Mayne Elementary teachers. www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap?arskey=33330&callingKey=region&callingValue=8



Catch A Special Thrill (C.A.S.T) HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program (FAC), Virginia

In partnership with C.A.S.T., the FAC developed and hosted three, one-day fishing and boating events designed for children with a wide range of special needs. Numerous volunteers and local and national partners helped make these events a success at sites nationwide. At the Genoa National Fish Hatchery, WI, a family fishing event on the Upper Mississippi River was held with support from several FAC field stations and national wildlife refuges. At the Pacific Region's office, an event was hosted at the Bonneville State Hatchery, located in the Columbia River Gorge, OR. Dozens of members from the United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon and Southwest Washington (UCP) came to fish as part of Disabled Free Fishing Day. The Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois facilitated a family fishing event on Crab Orchard Lake in September.



Showing off their catch at a recent C.A.S.T. event.



Youth for Habitat students Piper Brase and Daniel Woolf confer on the design for the playscape labyrinth. See story page 7.

Learn:

Providing educational opportunities for the nation's K-12 student population.

The Service has fostered environmental literacy, stewardship, and conservation for decades. Our regional and field staff provide learning opportunities that engage millions of young people, educators, and families through outdoor experiences based on local needs and realities. While no two environmental education programs are exactly alike, many can be grouped into programs that have similar characteristics in the methodologies used and audiences targeted. Volunteers are critically important in environmental education and enable the Service to reach thousands more. The following examples provide a snapshot of current programs for building environmental literacy and engaging the nation's young people in conservation.

Visitor Services

R1 / Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWR), Oregon

Visitor Services intern Katrina Maggilli helped sustain the Refuge volunteer and education program during a challenging year. Her accomplishments include various wildlife study programs, school outreach programs, training, Friends outreach and education, volunteer invasive species removal projects, and a multitude of outreach material editing. Kate is currently spearheading and organizing the 50th anniversary celebration of Willamette Valley NWR planned for May 2014.

Climate Change and Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) R1 / Columbia River Fisheries Program, Washington

The Columbia River Fisheries Program Office created the Region's first educational trunk filled with curricula and specimens to create awareness and prevent the spread of AIS. Trunk activities teach students and adults about negative impacts of AIS, and potential range expansions of invaders like destructive nutria under climate change conditions.



Food web activity found in the Columbia River Fisheries Program Office trunk.



Columbia River Fisheries Program Office educational trunk.

Fish in the classroom.



The trunk is available for checkout to local educators. The Tualatin River NWR created a companion version to help Refuge staff educate audiences about preventing the spread of AIS. www.fws.gov/columbiariver/ANS/

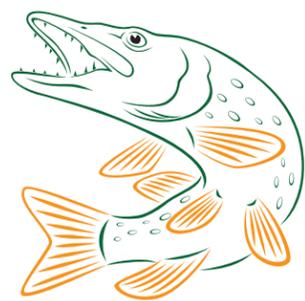
Native Fish in the Classroom (NFIC) Project R2 / New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NMFWCO), New Mexico

The NFIC project provides a hands-on approach for students to learn about natural resource conservation and jobs. Fifth grade students in Albuquerque and surrounding communities learned the value of aquatic ecosystems by developing personal connections to native fish while raising and releasing fish into their native habitats. NMFWCO provided all the necessary equipment to raise native fish in four classrooms located at Valle Vista, Emerson, Monte Vista, and

Laguna Elementary schools. In addition, NMFWCO provided technical support to Bosque School to purchase their own aquarium equipment. Staff delivered native fish to all five schools. By the season's end, 219 students were involved in the program, sharing the fish raising responsibilities. Community outreach, field trips, and environmental camps target students of all ages and the general public.



Mrs. Lomas' class works together on their wall sturgeon.



**Sturgeon in the Classroom Program
R3 / Genoa National Fish Hatchery,
Wisconsin**

The Sturgeon in the Classroom program allows teachers to bring a live lake sturgeon into their classroom, incorporate environmental education into lesson plans, and give students the responsibility of caring for their new classroom friend. A fourth-grade teacher from Viroqua Elementary highly praised the program for its relevant material that adds to the literacy, math, science, and social studies curriculum. Participation in Sturgeon in the Classroom currently includes seven classes ranging from kindergarten through high school, representing three different school districts.



Students welcome their new classmate, a lake sturgeon.

Youth gather with Director Dan Ashe and Regional Director Wendi Weber to dedicate the New Haven Harbor Watershed as the latest urban refuge partnership.



**Urban Refuge Partnerships
R5 / Northeast Regional Office,
Massachusetts**

The Regional Office hosted three new Urban Refuge Partnerships by dedicating the Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Partnership in Baltimore, MD; Providence Parks Urban Refuge Partnership in Providence, RI; and the New Haven Harbor Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in New Haven, CT. The Urban Refuge Partnership program is a new strategy for the Service to make lasting connections with urban communities throughout the country. The Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in New Haven, CT, named the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge as a leading partner in 2013. Through this effort, Refuge staff and other partners such as Audubon Connecticut and the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History worked directly to engage youth in habitat restoration, interpretive exhibit planning, and environmental education.

**Growing Conservationists
R7 / Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
(NWR), Alaska**

At this large island Refuge off the coast of Alaska, staff work to create meaningful experiences for youth of all ages. If a young person shows interest, staff will find a way to keep them involved. Currently, Refuge staff host programs for pre-kindergarten through college, which gives youth the opportunity to grow as conservationists through play, learn, serve, and then work experiences. Such was the case with this year's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crew leader, Anelise Zimmer. As a younger student, Anelise attended the Refuge's wildly popular Salmon Camp; she then returned the following summers and volunteered as a youth counselor. When she turned 15, she applied to join a YCC crew. Her passion and experience helped her land the spot as this year's crew leader. Participating in YCC really opened Anelise's eyes to public lands, conservation, and environmental studies. Through these experiences, she discovered her college major and the direction she'd like to take her career in conservation.

**Play and Learn: Teaching Urban Youth to Fish in their Backyards
R7 / Fisheries and Ecological Services, Anchorage, Alaska**

Service staff partnered with the Northeast Boys and Girls Club, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources to connect urban Anchorage youth to safe fishing opportunities within city limits. Quality salmon fishing equipment was purchased and life jackets donated which are now housed permanently at the Club. The kids received lively instruction on fishing ethics and regulations, salmon identification, and practiced casting before heading to Ship Creek in early August. Despite the fact the coho salmon were running and the fishing was slow, there was never a dull moment. The new anglers experienced balls of tangled line, forgot to engage reel bails, and crisscrossed lines. Other anglers gave the youth an extra wide berth, just like the fish, but enthusiasm grew as the casting improved, there was sighting of fish, and other anglers allowed youth to view and handle their salmon.

As they hone their technique, Jenessa, Taurean, and Zach will be able to land a coveted salmon and bring it from creek to plate (these two silvers were kindly lent for this photo-op by a lucky angler).

Credit: Sydney West/Northeast (Muldoon) Boys and Girls Club



Photo Credit: Anelise Zimmer



Photo Credit: Shelly Lawson

YCC crew leader, Anelise Zimmer and YCC intern, Lady Ann Marcelo help stain a deck at a remote public use cabin.

Kodiak youth assist biologists with an invasive plant survey.



Students from Imperial Beach Elementary School go to town on removing invasive iceplant weeds from the Habitat Heroes area of the San Diego Bay NWR. Lisa Cox/USFWS

Building Environmental Literacy One Class at a Time R8 / San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (SDBNWR), California

For the past three years, every student in third through sixth grade at the urban, predominantly minority, low-income Imperial Beach Elementary School came to the Refuge Complex to receive hands-on instructions about wildlife and habitat. Third graders visit the Tijuana Slough NWR and the Sweetwater Marsh Unit of San Diego Bay NWR to learn about estuaries. Fourth grade students go to San Diego NWR to learn about riparian habitats and the impact of upriver activity downriver. Fifth graders learn about the water quality in the bay by revisiting San Diego Bay NWR, and about oak woodland habitat at Crestridge Ecological Reserve (a state partner). SDBNWR Environmental Education Specialist Chantel Jimenez worked with teachers to write the curriculum and regularly update it to meet changing state learning standards. www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap.cfm?arskey=33666&callingKey=region&callingValue=8

Klamath Refuge Education and Outreach Program

R8 / Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, California

With a number of effective partnerships and the new environmental education center, the Refuge Complex had a successful year for environmental education and outreach, providing curriculum-based environmental education to nearly 1,500 students on-site and 1,000 students off-site. In addition, the Refuge Complex provided outreach to approximately 12,000 people through interpretive programs, festivals, and other events. Overall, the Refuge Complex reached nearly 15,000 people through their environmental education and outreach programs. www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap.cfm?arskey=34278&callingKey=region&callingValue=8



Refuge staff use the new Dave Menke Environmental Education Center classroom. USFWS

Schoolyard Habitat/Outdoor Classroom Program (SYH)

R8 / Pacific Southwest Region, California HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The SYH Program is a partnership between Region 8 and NCTC that coordinates schools, Service offices, and other conservation and community organizations to establish ecologically sound restoration projects on school sites that function as sustainable outdoor learning areas. With more than 500 SYH sites throughout the country, Region 8 (California, Nevada, and Klamath Basin) provides staffing support for national program coordination, and NCTC trains employees and/or partners in the SYH methodology. Region 8, one of the strongest supporters of the program, dedicates six full-time Schoolyard Habitat coordinators who work daily with

students, teachers, and community volunteers to implement over 20 habitat restoration projects on school grounds each year. The following example highlights the work of this innovative program in the Service's Pacific Southwest Region.

R8 / Lomakatsi Restoration Project, Oregon

This project received an \$8,000 grant through the Service's SYH Program to improve riparian habitat along the confluence of Paradise and Bear Creeks at Willow Wind Community Learning Center in Ashland, Oregon. The restoration project provides student service learning, integrated with the new common core standards so students can engage in real life experiences while learning English, math, and science skills. In addition to student successes, trees planted will provide shade for creeks, in-stream nutrients for aquatic species, wood for spawning pools for the coho and chinook salmon, steelhead, and a variety of migratory birds and other associated wildlife that use the gallery woodland and riparian habitats on the property. www.kobi5.com/news/local-news/item/students-help-with-restoration-efforts-along-bear-creek.html

Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design (JDS) Program HQ / Migratory Birds, Virginia

The JDS is a dynamic arts curriculum that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school. The program incorporates scientific and wildlife management principles into a visual arts curriculum, with participants completing a JDS design as their visual "term papers." Sales of Junior Duck Stamps through the years have generated more than \$1.3 million for the program which reached more than 29,460 youth from all 50 states, Washington, DC, and 2 territories in FY 2013. The program recently completed four different guides to assist classroom teachers, youth, non-formal educators, and homeschoolers to develop waterfowl and wetland conservation education projects. Over 10,000 sets of curriculum guides have been distributed. www.fws.gov/juniorduck/. Highlights from this year's program include:

- R2 / Southwest Region Junior Duck Stamp Program, New Mexico Region 2 funded, designed, and provided new pull-up "window shade" displays to State Junior Duck Stamp host sites in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona, as well as one to each of the other regional and national coordinators. Service staff will use these displays at booths and other venues to call attention to the Junior Duck Stamp program. The design features the artwork from the 2013 contest.
- R8 / Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, California Region 8 provided funding for printing of curriculum guides and encouragement of other Service employees to spend time working on the Junior Duck Stamp program through the Connecting People with Nature priority. There are plans to provide bins for classroom Junior Duck Stamp programming activities at different Refuges.



Visitors admire winning Junior Duck Stamp artwork displayed at an exhibit in Minnesota.



An Oklahoma student works on his art entry for the Junior Duck Stamp Program.

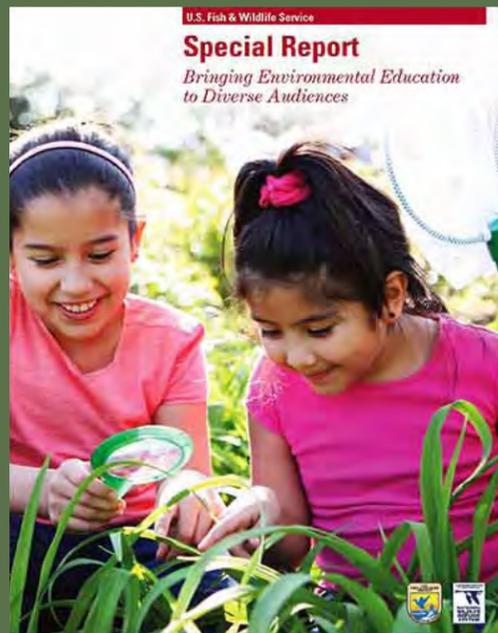
Students enjoy a day exploring wetlands at John Heinz NWR as part of the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program.



Special Report: Bringing Environmental Education to Diverse Audiences
HQ / National Wildlife Refuge System, Virginia

The Division of Visitor Services and Communications published, Special Report: Bringing Environmental Education to Diverse Audiences in January of 2013 to showcase and promote nine amazing environmental education programs from across the nation. From boosting middle school students' science achievements and environmental awareness in Florida, to the sharing of "traditional knowledge" as a powerful and respectful way to connect village children to nature in the wilds of Alaska, this report details how some refuges use innovative ways to connect underserved children to the great outdoors.

www.fws.gov/refuges/education/pdfs/FWS_specialReport.pdf



Nature Explore Classroom (NEC)
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program (FAC), Virginia
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The partnership among NCTC, FAC, the Creston National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in Montana, and the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Washington, and the Arbor Day Foundation continues to grow by maintaining and building Nature Explore Classrooms. NECs are dynamic nature-based safe play and learning spaces. Local Job Corps youth built the outdoor classroom at NCTC. Tribal Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) students built the local NEC at Creston NFH. Creston NFH partnered with Ducks Unlimited, Inc. to add a duck blind to their NEC, providing another learning opportunity for children. For each of the classrooms, spending time playing and learning is very much a part of the curriculum, as family visitation and teacher interest increases. At the Service's new Valle del Oro NWR, a partnership with the local community is building the NEC. The Service continues to connect people with nature through these outdoor classrooms and other natural outdoor learning areas.

Conservation Career Symposium
HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management, Virginia
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The Conservation Career Symposium held three events, one at NCTC, one in Albuquerque, NM, and a pilot regional event held in Corvallis, OR. These symposia were a collaborative effort between NCTC and the Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management, with strong support from Service programs and the regional recruiters. The three employment-skills-training events were designed to introduce diverse students to the Service and how the agency addresses key conservation challenges, improve student awareness of career opportunities, and how to apply for internships and permanent jobs with the Service. The 103 diverse undergraduate and graduate student participants, all pursuing mission critical majors (natural resource management, wildlife, fisheries, forestry, botany, biological science, zoology or environmental science/policy) were from 47 different colleges and universities nationwide. After completing the symposia, students demonstrated effective interviewing, networking, and job search skills.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2EcR8H_cww



Youth at the Conservation Career Symposium activity.

Shorebird Sister School Program (SSSP)
HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

A Service international bird curriculum designed to educate K-12 students about the conservation of migratory shorebirds and their habitats, SSSP includes a teacher's guide, student workbooks, posters and a growing website (all materials are available in English and Spanish). Region 5 used the curriculum to connect U.S. and Argentinian students.

www.fws.gov/sssp

- *R5 / Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia*
 The Refuge worked with a local private school to connect schoolchildren with shorebirds, and students in Argentina! Students met afterschool in a club called the "Shorebird Club" to learn about shorebirds that migrate through the area, the places the birds breed, and the places shorebirds winter. The two highlighted birds are the Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) and the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*). The migration of the Red Knot to Argentina connected the students with students in the Patagonia coastal region of Argentina. Students exchanged photos and letters with one another, and the experience left students with an appreciation of the amazing journey shorebirds take, as well as a bigger view of the world and other people who live so far away.

Wildlife Forever Partnership
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Virginia

For the second year, the Division of Fish and Aquatic Conservation staff judged and presented trophies for the Wildlife Forever "Fish Make You Smarter" contest. Throughout the United States, students in grades K-12 submitted artwork, poems, and essays on a state fish of their choice. Winners received awards at the Go Fish Education Center in Perry, GA, on July 13, 2013. www.wildlife-forever.org/contest/smarter/2013smarter



Fish Guy Logo (above)

Tad McCord, SC, being presented a First Place, "Fish Make You Smarter" Award for grades 7-9. Award Presenters: Chester Figiel (right), Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, and Micah Thorning USDA Forest Service (left).



NCTC Nature Explore Classroom being built by Job Corps youth.



Natural Leaders Legacy Camp
HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

In partnership with the Children and Nature Network, the Service supports the Natural Leader's Legacy Camp that has grown in the past 4 years to over 50 participants each year. Held in San Diego, CA, Seattle, WA, and Harpers Ferry, WV, the Legacy Camps taught young leaders to organize new initiatives in their communities to engage youth and families in outdoor activities such as outdoor service projects, Let's Get Outside events, and Nature-Deficit Disorder house parties. Students reached over 300,000 people and held 646 events in 2013 alone. The Natural Leaders are now working to develop a pipeline to outdoor jobs for youth from diverse backgrounds through a "Green Play to Green Pay" initiative.

Natural Leaders engage youth.



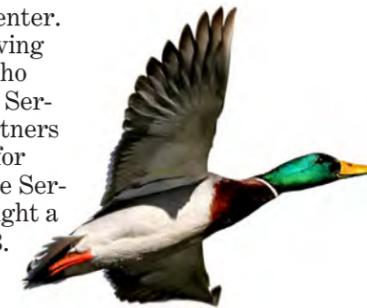
USFWS

Serve: Expanding volunteer opportunities by leveraging the expertise of partners.

Volunteers, Friends, and partners are valuable allies of the Service and vital to fulfilling our mission. Each year, they give generously of their time, expertise and resources to the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Fish Hatchery System, the Migratory Bird Program, the Office of Law Enforcement, Ecological Services and the National Conservation Training Center. They play an important role in serving the more than 47 million visitors who enjoy public lands managed by the Service. Volunteers, Friends, and partners are critically important resources for youth programming throughout the Service. The following activities highlight a sample of the successes in FY 2013.



Over 1,000 volunteers contributed toward the annual Conservation Day on the WPA event at St. Croix Wetland Management District.



Conservation Day on the Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), Partnership Program R3 / St. Croix Wetland Management District (WMD), Wisconsin

Conservation Day on the WPA is a partnership project with the Boy Scouts of America's Eagle River District, the Friends of the St. Croix WMD, and the Service's St. Croix WMD. The event is a field day designed to introduce scouts of all ages to issues related to habitat restoration and invasive species management through hands-on programs. Over 350 scouts and community volunteers gathered to remove invasive buckthorn and shrubs on two acres of an oak savanna and forest restoration project on the Oak Ridge WPA in St. Croix County, Wisconsin. The volunteers spent the morning working, and following a barbecue lunch, they participated in educational programs developed and presented by students from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls and at Stevens Point. The 2013 Conservation Day on the WPA was the third annual event, in total engaging over 1,000 volunteers in stewardship of their WPA. www.fws.gov/midwest/InsideR3/November13Story11.htm

Island Keeper Program R5 / Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Connecticut

The Refuge continued its Island Keeper volunteer program, which places college students and other young adults in various units of the Refuge throughout the busy summer season. Usually 6 or 8 of these volunteers are stationed as Island

Native American Liaison Program R2 / Southwest Region Native American Liaison, Arizona

Keeping with a newfound tradition, the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife held another annual tribal youth deer hunt. The Southwest Region's Native American Liaison, Joe Early, volunteered as a hunt mentor, teaming up with Julian Francisco, from Prewitt, New Mexico. Navajo youth, between the ages of 12 to 16, are selected based on essays about their interests and challenges in hunting, fishing or other outdoor recreational activities. Once selected, youth participate in a mandatory tribal 20-hour hunter education course certified by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and attend two firearm practice days.

Navajo Nation hunt is a success.





An Island Keeper volunteer works in a large patch of Japanese knotweed that is being removed from Calf Island.

Photo Credit: Stewart B McKinney



A volunteer with excellent shorebird experience works to band and to study tern chicks on Falkner Island.

Photo credit: Stewart B McKinney

Keepers in Calf, Chimon and Outer Islands in Long Island Sound. They work on habitat management, invasive species removal, bird surveys, environmental education, interpretive tours, and maintenance projects. Volunteers with migratory bird experience work on Falkner Island banding common and roseate tern chicks and studying their production. Each volunteer has two weeks of training on boat safety, accident prevention, and the Service. They work full-time and earn a small stipend to offset the cost of food and other supplies. These young people often express that their greatest motivational factor in making this commitment is to get valuable experience and to accomplish meaningful nature-based work that they enjoy. The Refuge gains immeasurable benefit from the passion and hard work of these young volunteers.

**Volunteer of the Year
R6 / Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah**

The 2013 Volunteer of the Year, presented by the National Wildlife Refuge Association, was awarded to Bob Ebling. He received this honor for donating his time in the Wildlife Education Center, orienting visitors, and encouraging youth. Mr. Ebling tells students to stay in school, not to be afraid of science, and to pursue math and science while working toward their full potential. A conservationist and Refuge advocate for over 50 years, and a volunteer for over 22 years, Mr. Ebling played a key role in the restoration of the Refuge after it laid in ruins by the flood of the Great Salt Lake in the mid-1980s. He shared professional engineering skills in reconstruction and was involved with visitor services in the Education Center, providing more than 10,000 hours of his time and professional talents. www.fws.gov/refuge/bear_river_migratory_bird_refuge/



Volunteer of the Year, Bob Ebling, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah.

**The Youth Effect
R7 / Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Alaska**

Volunteer Leila Pyle created a video, The Youth Effect that highlights her involvement in Refuge programs as she grew up. Leila participated in a variety of programs over the years and then became a paid member of the 2013 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crew. She is away in college now, but is volunteering her time to help with youth programs while home on winter break. She is also working to help create a teen environmental action group in Kodiak with high school students. To watch her video, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOEz8FUon9E&feature=share&list=UUMqPAPfBGsDMs2UiD-5Tbbg



Leila Pyle, YCC, helps inflate a raft at Frazer Lake in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

Photo credit: Anelise Zimmer



Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell with students during National Fishing and Boating Week. Photo credit: Joe Milmoe

**Tenth Annual National Public Lands Day
R8 / Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), California**

The Seal Beach Friends of Seal Beach NWR and the Navy hosted the tenth annual National Public Lands Day event in November 2013. A Department of Defense Legacy Grant, secured by the Naval Weapons Station, sponsored the event. About 200 volunteers, Refuge employees, and Navy staff planted 1,050 native upland plants on the Refuge property in just three hours. These plants provide habitat for pollinators, lizards, songbirds, and other animals. Volunteers included 2 Boy Scout troops, 20 members of Disney VoluntEARS, and 50 high school-aged boys from the National Guard's Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy in Los Alamitos. Volunteers from Boeing, another organization connected with Inside the Outdoors and Disney, also participated. Simple Green, headquartered in Huntington Beach and a neighbor to the Navy base and the Seal Beach NWR, showed their support by sending volunteers. www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap.cfm?arskey=34501&callingKey=region&callingValue=8



Youths from local schools had a great day of fishing, boating, learning, and fun by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its many partners.

Photo credit: Mike Weimer

**National Fishing and Boating Week
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, Virginia**

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, surrounded by more than 200 fourth- to seventh-grade students, joined numerous Service partners to launch National Fishing and Boating Week in June. Held at the Earth Conservation Corps Pump House on the Anacostia River, in Washington, DC, just blocks from Capitol Hill, the event featured hands-on fishing and boating opportunities for children and teachers, as well as lessons about boating safety and aquatic resource conservation. Service Deputy Director Rowan Gould praised the many partnerships that made the day possible by providing boats, fishing rods, buses, volunteers, and other necessary items for the students. During National Fishing and Boating Week, many states and the District of Columbia provide free fishing days (no license required). Free fishing days provide an excellent opportunity to take youth fishing or to introduce others new to the outdoors. www.doi.gov/news/mediaadvisories/secretary-jewell-to-kick-off-national-fishing-and-boating-week-with-students-on-anacostia-river.cfm



Wilderness Fellow Sarah Shpak at Medicine Lake Wilderness in Montana

Work: Develop opportunities for the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards through public and private partnerships in support of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps.

Using a variety of employment authorities and programs, and working with approximately 90 nonprofit partners, the Service employed 2,103 youth ages 15 – 25. The following activities highlight key employment efforts.

Partnership Employment

Nearly two-thirds of the youth who worked on Service-related projects in FY 2013 were employed by non-profit organizations working in partnership with our field stations, and regional and Washington offices. Some of these relationships involve multiple organizations and funding sources to provide opportunities for youth that otherwise could not be supported. Our partners come in all shapes and sizes, from the large nationally known Student Conservation Association (SCA) and AmeriCorps, to our small locally based non-profit Refuge Friends' groups; from high schools to universities; and from state and local programs to tribal entities. The Service established 93 partnerships in all 50 states and employed over 750 youth. Please see the side bar for a list of our youth employment partners in FY 2013.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Youth Employment Partners

- | | |
|--|---|
| Alaska Geographic | Michigan Technological University |
| Alaska Pacific University | Mile High Youth Corps |
| Alaska Science and Engineering Program | Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society |
| American Conservation Experience | Montana Conservation Corps |
| AmeriCorps | Mussett Family Foundation, Inc. |
| Arrupe Corporate Work Study Program | National Aquarium |
| Audubon Society of NH | National Audubon Society |
| Ball State University | National Park Service |
| Barrow Arctic Science Consortium | Native Village of Eyak |
| Bristol Bay Native Association | Northwest Youth Corps |
| California Conservation Corps | Northwoods Stewardship Center |
| California Waterfowl Association | Okefenokee Technical College |
| Calf Island Conservancy | Orutsararmuit Native Council |
| Chesapeake Volunteers in Youth Services | Otis Bay Inc. |
| Chicago Botanic Garden | Purdue University |
| Chickasaw Youth Program | Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe |
| City of Columbia Missouri | Quinhagak Traditional Council |
| College of Southern Idaho | Rocky Mt. Elk Foundation |
| Columbia College of Chicago | San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society |
| Connecticut State University | Sanibel - Captiva Coservation Foundation |
| Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa | Seney Natural History Association |
| Cristo Rey High School | Smith Valley/Mason Valley Conservation Districts, Nevada |
| Department of Labor | Southeast Alaska Guidance Association |
| Ding Darling Wildlife Society | St. Joseph the Worker Corps |
| East Bay Met School | St. Marks Refuge Association |
| Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges | Student Conservation Association |
| Friends of Arthur R Marxhall Loxahatchee NWR | Tanana Chiefs Conference |
| Friends of Deer Flat | The National Great Rivers Research & Education Center |
| Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge | Tucson Youth Development |
| Friends of Great Swamp NWR | University of Hawaii and Maloma Learning Center |
| Friends of Jordan River NFH | University of North Dakota |
| Friends of Nisqually NWR | University of Alaska Fairbanks/Wildlife Conservation Society Arctic Program |
| Friends of Ridgefield | University of Georgia |
| Friends of Southern Oregon | University of Maine |
| Friends of the NWR's of Rhode Island | University of Maine, Sparrow Research |
| Friends of the Rydell Refuge Association | University of New Hampshire |
| Friends of Willamette Valley NWR | University of Rhode Island |
| Frostburg University | U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS Wildlife Services |
| Greening Youth Foundation | Utah State University |
| Groundwork Denver | Vermont Institute of Natural Science |
| Humboldt County Office of Education | Vermont Youth Conservation Corps |
| International Wildlife Refuge Alliance | Washington Conservation Corps |
| Itasca Community College | William Paterson University |
| Koniag Koniag, Inc. | YMCA |
| Kupu Hawaii Youth Conservation Corps | YMCA of Klamath Falls |
| Kuskowim Native Association | |
| Living Coast Discovery Center | |
| Manomet Center for Conservation Science | |
| Merritt Island Wildlife Association | |

R1 / Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Oregon

The Friends of Southern Oregon Coastal Refuges and the Oregon Coast NWR Complex hired an intern to serve as the Wildlife Education Coordinator from January to August of 2013. Julia Ledbetter served in this role and her responsibilities included coordination of the Refuge Complex's environmental education Shorebird Sister Schools Program. Julia spent six months teaching a Service curriculum to more than 500 fourth and fifth grade students in three different counties. In addition she served as a rocky shore interpreter in partnership with Oregon State Parks, the Haystack Rock Awareness Program and the Bureau of Land Management. Finally, Julia organized and led 10 interpretive guided paddle tours at Siletz Bay NWR.

R5 / John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Pennsylvania

The Student Conservation Association's (SCA) crews in Philadelphia and Camden consisted of local high school students working in neighborhood parks, as well as John Heinz NWR for six weeks over the summer. The program engages youth to both serve their community and to practice conservation values at home. Young conservationists participated in a training day at John Heinz NWR and received green job readiness training, learned how to use hand tools, went on environmental education field trips, improved local natural areas, and went camping at the end of the season to celebrate their accomplishments. The hands-on conservation work included trail maintenance, invasive species removal, community gardening, and general clean-ups.

Student Conservation Association crew at John Heinz NWR.



Youth are hard at work, but having fun too at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.



Young conservationist at the John Heinz NWR.

R6 / National Wildlife Refuge System, Mountain Prairie Region, Colorado

Through partnerships with Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa Groundwork Denver, Mile High Youth Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, and the Student Conservation Association, Region 6 is developing the next generation of conservation stewards and ensuring a pipeline of skilled and diverse employees for the Service. Using cooperative agreements to work with 21st Century Conservation Service Corps members, Region 6 employed 175 young people, in 8 states, contributing over 11,000 hours at nearly 40 percent of their stations while augmenting the ability to reach new audiences. To help Corps members develop as professionals and individuals, and to position them for future employment, Refuge staff mentored youth in areas ranging from technical skills to career opportunities. After learning the

Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa work crew at Arrowood NWR, North Dakota.



specifics of various management practices and the wide-ranging responsibilities for stewardship (federal, state, local, tribal, partner, and private citizen), the young people contributed to nearly every facet of work, including vital habitat restoration and management, endangered species recovery, biological surveys, environmental education, GIS/GPS mapping projects, and much more.

HQ. / Division of Natural Resource, National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), Virginia

In its second year partnership with the American Conservation Experience, the NWRS Division of Natural Resources funded eight internships for undergraduate and graduate-level students keenly interested in careers in federal land management. These eight Wilderness Fellows worked on baseline wilderness character assessments and long-term monitoring strategies on Service wilderness areas at 14 refuges from Alaska to Georgia. Sarah Shpak (see photo page 20), a Wilderness Fellow at Medicine Lake Wilderness in Montana wrote, "As a wilderness fellow, I am collecting data on the status of the lake itself: the water quality, fluctuations in water level, and amount of annual precipitation all affect the value of this habitat for migrating birds. I hope my work here helps ensure that the lake remains a productive waterfowl breeding spot and helps managers assess the impact of their management actions."

Pathways

The Service's Pathways Program employed 856 students attending college or vocational schools in FY 2013. The Pathways program, which replaced the former Student Education Employment Program in FY 2013, provides students in high school, college, trade school and other qualifying educational institutions with paid opportunities to work in federal agencies and explore careers while completing their education. www.opm.gov/hiringreform/pathways/

R4 / Asheville Ecological Services Field Office Work, North Carolina

The spruce-fir moss spider is an endangered, BB-sized spider that lives in a certain type of moss mat growing beneath the spruce-fir forests on the highest peaks in the eastern United States. This past summer, David Caldwell,



Pathways Intern David Caldwell searches for spruce-fir moss spider.

a Pathways intern in the Asheville Ecological Service Field Office, joined Service biologists and researchers from Auburn University and the University of California-San Diego on hands and knees in this dense forest, searching for the spider. For five years, the Asheville Field Office has made extensive use of student hiring authorities ensuring that each student is exposed to a wide range of responsibilities, from managing the office-recycling program, to developing site management plans, to teaching students about stream insects. After their internship, students have become permanent Service staff, continued on to graduate school, or, in one case, became a high school biology teacher.



Young N' Wild Youth Blog empowers others to tell conservation stories.

R5 / External Affairs, Northeast Regional Office, Massachusetts

The Refuge tackled the issue of conservation communications by hiring young communicators to empower others to tell conservation stories in their own words. The Refuge developed the inspiring Young N' Wild youth blog series, which featured several youth interns and employees as guest bloggers, writing about their experiences and impressions of working with the Service. Students' blogs were shared through social media, partner websites, and featured in their schools' newsletters.

The Refuge also developed a new Youth Opportunities website with information on youth employment programs, intern testimonials, resources for school and work, and other information on careers in natural resource management. Eventually, some of the youth programs were featured in local newspapers as well. <http://usfwsnortheast.wordpress.com/2013/07/10/young-n-wild/>

Youth Conservation Corps

Over 470 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) at the Service's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, NCTC, regional offices, and Headquarters in Arlington, VA. These summer jobs are available to students ages 15-18, and for many, it is the first paying job they have ever had. Service staffs typically recruit students in local communities through newspaper announcements, high school job fairs, science classes and clubs, state labor offices, or during special visits to the schools.

R2 / Northern New Mexico National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex, New Mexico

The Service joined efforts at the Alvarado Downtown Garden, also known as an Urban Farm, in Albuquerque, to give back to the local community while promoting environmental education. Debbie Pike, Visitors Services Manager, led YCC students and Regional Office staff to install shade structures and pollinator beds. This is just one of the urban farming partnerships with the Service under way in Region 2. There are several other urban initiatives taking place that are employing YCC members to engage communities in conservation including one in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and another in partnership with the Mountain View Community Center and the urban Valle de Oro NWR in Albuquerque.

Shade structure in progress.





Andrea Hilla-Custodio/USFWS

YCC enrollees Khalid Sheikhomar and Armarie Williams install an electric fence on a Waterfowl Production Area.

R3 / National Wildlife Refuge System, Midwest Regional Office, Minnesota

For the second year, the Midwest Regional Office's Refuges program hosted a YCC crew composed of two young students from the Twin Cities. High school students Khalid Sheikhomar and Armarie Williams were recruited with assistance from Service partner STEP-UP Achieve, a City of Minneapolis program that connects businesses with the next generation of talented and diverse workers, provides critical hands-on job skills for young people, and builds a stronger Twin Cities workforce. Khalid is a recent immigrant from Somalia, and worked in the Division of Visitor Services. Armarie worked in the Division of Realty. In addition to performing clerical duties at the Regional Office, both enrollees teamed up with the YCC crew at St. Croix Wetland Management District multiple times throughout the summer to acquire fieldwork experience.

R4 / Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Kentucky

During the summer of 2013, the Wolf Creek NFH employed four YCC students to work with the hatchery's day-to-day production of rainbow, brown, and brook trout and rearing of imperiled species. The students were also involved in planning and preparing the hatchery's annual Catch a Rainbow Fishing Derby held in June, which attracted over 1,350 children ages 1-15. The students completed specific projects on a daily basis and filled staffing voids, thus enabling completion of annual goals providing quality experiences for the American people.



Youth Conservation Corps students at Wolf Creek NFH. (above and left)



R4 / Office of Diversity and Civil Rights, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia

The Southeast Region Student Ambassadors Program employs students to conduct monthly outreach activities to increase interest in and knowledge of the Service on college campuses, with the goal of increasing the number of students applying for Service positions. Ambassadors conduct a number of activities including presentations with relevant academic departments, meeting with key faculty and staff, and individually advising students and student clubs. This year's selections included students from The University of Georgia, Louisiana Tech University, and the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff. Student ambassador highlights include providing student contact lists, marketing meetings, and round tables with campus clubs like Wildlife Society, Society of American Foresters, Society of Conservation of Biology, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences Chapters (MANRRS), and non-traditional ethnically diverse students.



Student at Cabo Rojo works on a tropical bird data and monitoring project.

R4 / Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico

The Refuge used new media to promote YCC opportunities far and wide. Recruitment flyers were prepared in Spanish, distributed to surrounding communities, and posted on the Cabo Rojo and Laguna Cartagena NWR Facebook pages. Although 200 applications were received and the Refuge could only host 10 interns, this was a huge step in continuing youth career awareness efforts in the local community. The students worked with a variety of projects including maintenance assistance to the Puerto Rico Police Department and Cabo Rojo Municipality, upkeep of the Refuge's greenhouse, various educational trips, and transplanting and reforesting areas of the Refuge.



YCC student works on restoration project at Cabo Rojo.

R6 / Ennis National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Montana

Ennis NFH hired a diverse and talented group of eight Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) members in 2013. The year's activities included fish culture (e.g. sorting, spawning, feeding, counting, stocking, etc.), outreach projects, community events, and general hatchery maintenance. Accomplishments included landscaping at the Madison Farm to Fork greenhouses, an organization that provides locally grown produce for the community of Ennis, and teaching archery to local elementary students. YCC interns assisted with the coordination of the Good Thymes Camp to provide positive outdoor and resource learning opportunities and experiences for local youth. They also participated in water quality monitoring with the Madison Stream Team, a group of volunteers who collect water quality data along several local streams that have been identified as impaired by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. <http://www.fws.gov/ennis/>

Ethan Kunard of the Madison Conservation District teaching YCC member Slater Ward about water quality monitoring in Blaine Spring Creek, Ennis, MT.

R8 / San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex, California

The San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Merced NWR, San Joaquin River NWR, San Luis NWR, and the Grasslands Wildlife Management Area) sponsored a YCC crew comprised of 11 youth from 3 local high schools, who worked a 40-hour week for 8 weeks. They completed tasks that contributed to the management and conservation of the Complex's wildlife and habitat resources. The vegetation monitoring work performed by the YCC crew made them an important link in the Refuge Complex's resource management program. Work areas included the Lonetree unit of the Merced NWR, which contains important uplands. These uplands are part of the historic habitat corridor for the San Joaquin kit fox and the elk enclosure on the San Luis NWR that supports the Refuge's herd of tule elk. Also included was the East Bear Creek unit of the San Luis NWR, containing floodplain wetland habitat recently reclaimed and restored after decades of agricultural use. www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap.cfm?arskey=34443&callingKey=region&callingValue=8





Ryan Hagerly/USFWS

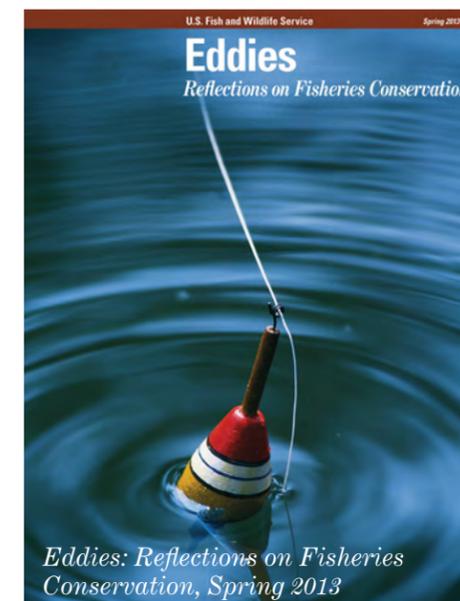
Leadership, Coordination, and Training

The Department established the Youth Partnership and Service (YPS) Office to provide Department-wide leadership, coordination, and direction for youth programs. The YPS Office Director reports to the Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget, and NCTC directly supports the office with permanently assigned staff. The Youth Task Force, formed with staff-level bureau and office representatives, supports the work of the YPS Office. Representatives from the NWRS, Budget Planning and Human Capital (BPHC), and NCTC regularly attend the monthly Youth Task Force meetings to coordinate work with other bureaus in the Department. The following activities highlight the important leadership activities that support the YGO initiative in the Service.

Communication and Coordination

Eddies: Reflections on Fisheries Conservation HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Virginia

The Eddies Spring 2013 issue focused on youth and nature. This 32-page magazine delivered to hard copy and on-line readers outside the Service and across the country, featured stories not only about conservation education, but also about young conservationists them-



Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) supports a wide variety of outdoor activities.

selves. Features included youth volunteer and tribal youth work at National Fish Hatcheries, an on-the-ground conservation project designed and built by Albuquerque high school students, and winning essays from a national competition. www.fws.gov/eddiess/

VOICES (Visitor Outreach, Interpretation, Communication, and Education Services) HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

The Division of Education and Outreach produces VOICES, an electronic newsletter published bimonthly to nearly 400 Service employees. Its purpose is to distribute valuable resources for the Connecting People with Nature priority and the Youth in the Great Outdoors initiative. Topics include educational resources, professional development, conferences, programs, workshops, grants, and awards that will further the growth of Service employees. The colorful email format, with brief write-ups, photos, and videos features “live” links so Service staff can go directly to the source and further enhance their knowledge. <http://training.fws.gov/DEO/voices.html>

Fisheries Conservation Education Program HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Virginia

The National Fisheries Conservation Education team, which consists of a coordinator from most regions, continues their work to increase opportunities to play, learn, serve, and work for youth at fisheries facilities. The team meets via conference calls every 4-6 weeks to share regional accomplishments, ideas, and challenges. The team also has a fisheries education group Facebook page. This provides a way for Fish and Aquatic Conservation staff to connect with field stations that work with, or are interested in conservation education.



Youth Coordination Team Members

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National Conservation Training Center	Drew Burnett	drew_burnett@fws.gov
National Wildlife Refuge System	Phil LePelch	phil_lepelch@fws.gov

Youth Coordination Team HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

The focus of the Youth Coordination Team (YCT) is the coordination of employment programs and activities for youth, ages 15–25. Key programs include Youth Conservation Corps, Pathways (formerly SEEP), and youth employed through partnerships. With representatives from every region and most Headquarters programs, the group meets monthly on conference calls to coordinate departmental reporting requirements, share strategies for increasing the number of youth employed each year, and provide advice and input to the development of departmental policy initiatives.



Ryan Hagerly/USFWS

Regional Recruiters HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management, Virginia

The Service employs nine recruiters (one in HQ and one in each Region) who work with hiring officials and partners to execute strategies that reach targeted groups of women, minorities, and people with disabilities to increase the pool of candidates for all vacancies in the Service. The overall goal of the recruiters is to increase the diversity of the Service’s workforce. In addition to actively engaging existing internal and external recruitment sources, recruiters developed relationships with sources such as the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services. Recruiters also utilize resources such as the Department of Labor Workforce Recruitment Program’s database of college students and recent graduates with disabilities.

Training

HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

The Division of Education and Outreach has the lead for the development and implementation of professional development training for Department employees and their partners responsible for the YGO initiative. Described below are training strands and course highlights. Courses include face-to-face and distance-learning formats.

Training Strands

- *The Youth Outdoor Skills Curriculum Strand* offers five courses that provide Service employees with skills and tools that they can use to connect youth to the outdoors.

- *The Environmental Education Curriculum Strand* offers 18 courses that focus on best practices and demonstrate how environmental education serves as a resource management tool for the Service.

The Youth Leadership and Supervision Curriculum Strand offers four courses for Service and Department supervisors and team leaders who work directly with the younger employees, providing them with tools and resources to solve complex environmental and natural resource problems using management strategies that will work most effectively and productively for them.

Course Highlights

- *Archery as an Outreach Tool*
This year, in partnership with the Archery Trade Association, National Archery in the Schools, and USA Archery, 16 Service staff completed the course, which provided instructor certification to train others as archery instructors. The goal of this course is to introduce archery to youth as an outdoor recreation activity that they can participate in for a lifetime. Archery not only teaches discipline, motor skills, and patience, but also instills a desire to have fun, and links youth to the outdoors, conservation, and career opportunities. Since this course began in 2011, 45 participants including Service staff, state agency staff, and non-government organizations members have obtained instructor certification and gone on to certify over 80 instructors who in turn hosted hundreds of events introducing and developing programs that teach archery skills to youth and their families.



- *Building Urban Community Habitats with Youth – New Course*
Approximately 20 participants from 6 communities completed this Service pilot course designed to empower conservation professionals to assess, develop, and work with local youth service corps that engage 14-25 year olds in job training, conservation skills, and leadership opportunities through community habitat enhancement, restoration, or monitoring projects. Participants gathered in downtown Albuquerque and redesigned an existing community vegetable garden that was originally developed and maintained by U.S. Veterans. Using knowledge and tools presented during the course, participants designed a new environment that incorporated the existing garden into a wildlife habitat to support resident and migratory wildlife native to the locale. After finishing the course, participants worked with members of their local conservation corps to complete the first phase of the habitat. This course will be offered in four additional urban areas by then end of FY 2016.



Youth Service Corps students working on project.

Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) Regional Funding Initiative HQ / National Conservation Training Center, West Virginia

Since its inception in 2011, the Connecting People with Nature Regional Funding Initiative (RFI) has granted more than \$720,000 to spark innovative youth programs in all 8 regions. In FY 2013, NCTC granted over \$230,000 to 49 field sites. These projects supported Service priorities including climate change, youth conservation leadership development, urban initiatives, citizen science and science inquiry, inclusive workforce development, and tribal involvement. The RFI has assisted the field in maintaining a strong foundation of programs and projects that help the Service carry out the CPWN priority, while supporting a wide variety of opportunities for individuals of all ages to learn and work at Service refuges and hatcheries, and on partner lands.

Connecting People with Nature National Work Group Members

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Conclusion

This report demonstrates how deeply integrated youth programs are throughout the Service, including field stations, fish hatcheries, national wildlife refuges, wetland management districts, waterfowl production areas, as well as regional and national program offices. As the Service confronts the increasing wave of employee retirements and decreasing interest in the outdoor environment among our nation's young people, the importance of building the next generation of conservation leaders to join our ranks and tackle complex conservation challenges becomes all the more important. The Service is proud of the comprehensive nature of its programs that reach millions of young people, their educators, and their families every year. The Service encourages youth to play, learn, serve, and work and develop a passion for conservation. We look forward to improving our programs and sharing our experiences more broadly, always with the hope of involving more young people in the important work we do: working with people to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

