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# Youth in the Great Outdoors

*2015 Annual Report*



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Milkweed. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

## Introduction

In March 2014 Secretary Jewell issued *Order Number 3332 Engaging the Next Generation*, instructing the Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus to build upon the outstanding work and programs already operating at local offices and units around the country, and to pursue a comprehensive strategy to encourage millions of young people to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. The order also identified specific goals as follows:

- 1. Play:** Develop or enhance outdoor recreation partnerships in 50 cities over the next 4 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 the DOI has now. In order to achieve the volunteer goal, we will place a renewed emphasis on volunteer coordination and management.
- 4. Work:** To develop the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards and ensure our own skilled and diverse workforce pipeline, DOI will provide 100,000 work and training opportunities to young people within our bureaus and through public-private partnerships.

Engaging the next generation is a critically important strategy for achieving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) conservation mission. We are challenged as never before to ensure our relevance in a rapidly changing America. Awareness and support are essential so that Americans will care about conservation and the work we do to safeguard the Nation's natural resources.

We must connect with rural audiences as well as the ever-growing ethnically and racially diverse urban youth



Dan Ashe and a Girl Scout check on a milkweed planting at the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Lisa Cox/USFWS

*“Of all the achievements I value in my career, there’s nothing quite like getting outside with kids and seeing the look of wonder blossom in their faces when they experience wildlife and the natural world. If kids today don’t develop a personal connection with nature, it could affect their health and well-being, and have profound implications for public support for wildlife conservation in the future. That’s why it’s so vital for our society, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to do everything we can to provide opportunities for kids from all walks of life to experience nature for themselves.”*

*- Dan Ashe, Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



Dan Ashe celebrates monarchs with Girl Scouts and other Service conservation leaders at the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Lisa Cox, USFWS

population. This becomes increasingly crucial as young people spend less time outdoors, thus losing touch with nature. The Service has a multifaceted approach to align the *Engaging the Next Generation* priority with Service priorities, increase our relevancy to the American people, and continue our long and rich tradition of engaging the next generation.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, the Service offered a comprehensive array of programming for youth that encompassed the Play, Learn, Serve, and Work goals outlined in the Secretary's Order. These programs reached millions of young people and are integrated deeply throughout the agency, from field stations, fish hatcheries, and national wildlife refuges, to regional and national program offices. This Report highlights the work accomplished across the Service, and is only a small sampling of our efforts and commitment to build lifelong conservation stewards. Since young people are our future conservation leaders, youth engagement is critical for the continued stewardship of the natural resources the Service conserves, protects, and enhances.

It bears mentioning that this work has not been without its challenges. Extremely tight budgets and limited staff resources required the Service to increasingly turn to partnerships and volunteers to help achieve our youth programming goals. In some instances, there was insufficient capacity to support partnership work or to adequately oversee volunteers. An additional complication is the effective and timely use of myriad old and new youth employment authorities available to hiring managers for employing young people after they've been engaged and educated in conservation and the mission of the Service.



www.youthgo.gov

One of the top priorities of the Youth in the Great Outdoors initiative is to increase participation of diverse, tribal, veteran, or other underserved audiences. Watch for highlights of diversity programs and activities in the blue sidebars and textboxes.

**PLAY** 49.1 million people hunted, fished, and observed or photographed wildlife on the Service's national wildlife refuges (NWR) and national fish hatcheries (NFH).

**LEARN** 1.5 million 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.

24,300 youth participated in the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school.

23,000 youth were reached by the Urban Bird Treaty Program with migratory bird education and outreach programs in 20 urban areas.

12,900 students participated in the construction of new Schoolyard Habitat (SYH) project sites across the country. The program establishes schoolyard wildlife habitats, which are used as outdoor classrooms to teach about the importance of environmental stewardship.

**Serve** 40,300 volunteers gave nearly 1.5 million hours of their time, in addition to their expertise and other resources, to nearly all branches of the Service. Volunteers are critically important resources, and they help the Service provide quality experiences for the millions of visitors who enjoy our lands each year.

# WORK

4,174 youth, ages 15–35, were employed either directly or through partnerships with nonprofit organizations.

94 nonprofit partner organizations employed 1,246 youth who worked in all 50 states helping achieve resource management goals. Of these employees, 54 students completed the Service's Directorate Resource Assistant Fellowship program and are on track to receive direct hire status for federal positions upon graduation as authorized under the Public Land Corps Act.

2,928 young people under the age of 35 were employed in permanent and temporary positions. Of these employees:

- 259 students attending high school, college, or vocational schools filled Pathways positions with the Service.
- 545 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) at the Service's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, regional offices, and at Headquarters (HQ) in Falls Church, VA.





R2 / YMCA youth getting their hands dirty while learning about native habitat. Ken Garrahan/USFWS

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

The Service provided excellent opportunities for young people to play outdoors at field stations and through partnership programs. Millions of young people enjoyed experiences outdoors through interpretative programs at national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries; schoolyard habitats in over 500 schools nationwide; and outdoor play spaces on Service or partner lands. Included are a few highlights of these experiences.

### Chehalis Basin Pacific Lamprey Geocaching Challenge R1 / Lacey, Washington

The Chehalis Basin Pacific Lamprey Geocaching Challenge is an engaging program that weaves conservation science, fun facts, and the Amazing Race into one smart phone and family-friendly adventure! Participants LEARNED as they answered the “mystery cache” questions focusing on Pacific Lamprey and the Chehalis Basin to obtain the latitude and longitude coordinates they needed to find the caches. Participants PLAYED as they traveled throughout the Chehalis Basin in search of the hidden caches. Two Service AmeriCorps volunteers SERVED as they provided associated educational programming, which included GPS training and an all-day field trip for the Olympia YMCA “Girls without Limits!” STEM-themed spring break camp. For this associated event, 15 young women learned about GPS technology, how it is used in conservation science, and about the Chehalis watershed and Pacific Lamprey biology as they completed the challenge.



Service AmeriCorps volunteer helps YMCA campers as they search for one of the six hidden caches.



YMCA campers proudly display the cache they found along with their GPS units and geocaching challenge passports.



Lamprey. USFWS

### Let's Move Outside! Region 2 / Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Albuquerque, New Mexico

As part of the Interior Department's leadership of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move Outside!* initiative to engage the next generation of outdoor stewards, Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry joined Janice Schneider,

Assistant Secretary of Land Minerals Management, Cezanne Fritz, President & CEO of the YMCA of Central New Mexico, and the Service's Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle at a celebration event to announce that Albuquerque was selected as 1 of the first 50 cities to participate in the nationwide movement. Youth from the local YMCA and local urban conservation corps crews joined in the celebration as well, assisting with a service project as part of the event.



Preschool-age children discover worms living under the prairie.

**Nature Tots R3 / Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Prairie City, Iowa**

Nature Tots, a monthly program for preschool-age children at Neal Smith NWR, gets young children outdoors and excited exploring nature while developing an emotional connection with the natural world. Each month's activities are based on a different theme and begin with a discussion and story about the topic, followed by a short activity or game. The activity continues with the children, parents, and refuge staff spending at least 30 minutes outside exploring the prairie. The outdoor time focuses on free exploration and nature play. Activities conclude with a craft, allowing children to take something home to remember their experience. Average attendance for each program is 15-20 children and their parents, many of whom come every month.

USFWS

**Astronomy and Night Sky Summer Series R5 / Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Chincoteague Island, Virginia**

Do you love astronomy? How about meteor showers? Ever thought how cool it would be to view this spectacle from a barrier island beach, with minimal interference of artificial light? The NASA Wallops Flight Facility Visitor Center partnered with Chincoteague NWR, Assateague Island National Seashore, and the Delmarva Space Sciences Foundation to offer an Astronomy and Night Sky Summer Series on Assateague

Island, Virginia. Each event in the series began with several "Astronomy 101" auditorium presentations in the refuge visitor center, followed by night sky observations at the recreational beach using binoculars and/or high-powered telescopes. Witnessing the Perseid meteor shower during its peak was one of the many highlights of the series. This pilot program was very successful with 1,347 participants during 9 presentations of the Astronomy 101 program, and more than 2,500 participants in the Night Sky Telescope & Binocular Viewing activities.



Inter-generational visitors at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge patiently wait their turn to discover the night sky at Assateague Island, Virginia.

Stargazing with high-powered telescopes and binoculars.



Kim Check/NASA



Denver area youth enjoy Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge's fishing clinic.

**Urban Rangers R6 / Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Denver, Colorado**

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR and Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) are building capacity for a youth employment program called "Urban Rangers." Run by ELK, Urban Rangers recruits high school and college students from the Montbello neighborhood of Denver, an area with a population of 30,000 people and a childhood poverty rate of 34 percent. Urban Rangers is a partnership between ELK, Denver Parks and Recreation, the National Park Service, the Refuge, and Denver Botanic Gardens. Using a curriculum developed for youth visitors to the Refuge, Urban Rangers worked alongside FWS staff in fishing clinics and day camps that reached out to the communities surrounding the Refuge. Forty-five camp participants between the ages of 3 and 15 learned about the ecology of the Refuge and played in the "Bison Olympics" where the youth tested their abilities against those of imaginary bison.



**Soul River Alaska Fly Fishing Expedition R7 / Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), USFWS-Alaska Fisheries, Kenai, Alaska and R1/R7/R8 Office of Diversity and Civil Rights**

This summer an unconventional group of anglers, including 14 urban youth, and 7 military veterans, ventured to Kenai NWR. Their long days were filled with observing brown and black bears, camping in the wilderness, casting for trophy-sized rainbow trout, and tying flies. Yet their most memorable lessons might be the ones shared around the campfire that touched on military service, traumatic life experiences, navigating cultural differences, and learning to love the outdoors on their own terms. This grand expedition was made possible by a partnership with the northwest non-profit Soul River Inc. whose mission is to uplift and strengthen communities by connecting inner-city youth and U.S. veterans to the outdoors through conservation and fly fishing. Soul River Inc.'s community-driven mission falls closely into line with the National Wildlife Refuge System's efforts to engage new audiences in recreation on refuges. To learn more about Soul River Inc. and the Alaska Fly Fishing Expedition, see the short documentary at <https://vimeo.com/148274947>.



Inner-city youth, U.S. veterans, and volunteers come together to form a community in Alaska's rugged wilderness.



Jajuan first catch! A Dolly Varden!



Cameron learning to tie a fly.



Inner-city youth.



Children and parents from the Bishop Paiute and Santa Ynez Band of Chumash tribes participated in the 3-day camping adventure at Santa Cruz Island.

Colleen Dragueskul/USFWS

**Bishop Paiute First Bloom Program**  
**R8 / Ventura Fish and Wildlife Service Office,**  
**Ventura, California**

More than 60 kids, parents, and chaperones from 2 tribes joined FWS for a multi-day excursion to Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the islands that make up Channel Islands National Park. Members of the Bishop Paiute Tribe and Santa Ynez Band of Chumash enjoyed three days of camping, hiking, and kayaking as part of First Bloom. This program, from the National Park Foundation, connects children—particularly urban youth—to the natural world while they restore natural habitats and begin to value environmental stewardship. For many of the kids and their families, this was the first time they saw the ocean or visited Santa Cruz Island. Kids learned how to set up camp, saw peregrine falcons hunting barn swallows, paddled through a pack of hunting sea lions, and read and journaled about their experiences. FWS partnered with the National Park Service and Bishop Paiute Tribe to organize this program.



Steve Guertin, Deputy Director of the Service, and Mary Breaux Wright, International President of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, attend the signing ceremony during Zeta Leadership Training.

**Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Partnership**  
**HQ / External Affairs, Falls Church, Virginia**

The Service signed an historic memorandum of understanding with the leading African American sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., to guide cooperative work engaging urban youth in outdoor recreation, biological sciences, and healthy activity in nature. The partnership will unite Zeta members and the Service in engaging youth in recreation on national wildlife refuges and helping them understand how such activity promotes healthy living, which aligns with the “Zetas Have Heart” health initiative. The partnership also aims to boost opportunities for young people to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers, and give Zetas a greater voice on conservation issues. In addition, the pact is meant to encourage African American students and professionals to consider Service careers.

The Pittman-Robertson and Sport Fish Restoration Acts provide a continual stream of funding for state wildlife programs, including hunter and aquatic resource education, wildlife surveys, wildlife transplants, and the purchase and management of wildlife management areas. These funds come from federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, fishing equipment, and motor boat and small engine fuels. Funds are apportioned by the Service to the states using formulas based on multiple criteria, such as the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold in each state. Learn more at

<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/>.



Youngsters are especially excited to meet “Kuikani,” a 21 foot-long inflatable humpback whale, at ECOBAC’s Whale-art Festival. ECOBAC

**Humpback Whale Environmental Education (EE) and Training Program in Mexico**  
**HQ / International Affairs, Falls Church, Virginia**

In 2015, the Mexican non-governmental organization *Ecología y Conservación de Ballenas, A.C. (ECOBAC)* received financial support from the Service’s Wildlife Without Borders-Mexico program to support EE on the conservation of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Mexican Pacific (Banderas Bay, Rincon de Guayabitos, and San Blas in the states of Jalisco and Nayarit). These areas are important breeding and wintering grounds for humpback whales, which are under threat by rapid tourism development. Service funds supported ECOBAC’s second Whale-art Festival to promote the importance of conserving the breeding grounds of the humpback whale through fun outreach activities. Funds also supported EE activities in the region’s schools and public spaces to raise awareness about the biology, behavior, and conservation of the humpback whale, and inspire youth to care about the future of the species.



Whale conservation school outreach. Frank McCann/ECOBAC

**Urban Kids Fishing Derby**  
**HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC), and External Affairs (EA),**  
**Falls Church, Virginia**

The Service, Urban American Outdoors TV (UAOTV), the National Park Service, Healthy Parks and Healthy People, and the U.S. Forest Service hosted the Urban Kids Fishing Derby in Washington DC at Constitution Gardens on the National Mall. EA coordinated the event and FAC provided fishing gear. The DC fishing derby is one of many outdoor events UAOTV has hosted since they began broadcasting in 1999. UAOTV’s goal is to increase diversity and inclusion in outdoor and nature activities across the U.S, to debunk the myths that people of color aren’t interested in the outdoors. Learn more about UAOTV at <http://uaotv.com/>.

top: Fish and Aquatic Conservation Deputy Assistant Director Jeff Underwood helps youth cast a line during the Urban Kids Fishing Derby. Bob Pos/USFWS  
 bottom: Fishing is Fun! Just ask any kid that attended the Urban Kids Fishing Derby. Bob Pos/USFWS





R4 / Students identify species netted in Little Lagoon, USFWS

## 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 employees provide learning opportunities that engage and educate millions of young people, educators, and families through outdoor experiences based on local needs and realities. Volunteers are critically important in environmental education programs and enable the Service to extend its reach. The following summaries provide a snapshot of current, effective programs for building environmental literacy and engaging the nation's young people in conservation.

### Houston Urban Refuge Wildlife Partnership R2 / Regional Office, Houston, Texas

Furr High School's Green Ambassadors (GA) spent their spring break on two Houston-area national wildlife refuges (NWR). The 16 students helped the Anahuac NWR band waterfowl, which were captured using a rocket net. The GAs were part of the team that helped safely get more than 200 birds into cages and transport them to the banding area where they held the birds as they went through the banding process. After dipnetting and collecting invertebrates, the GAs helped with a research project by sorting and documenting the samples. In addition to learning about the different careers in conservation, the GAs got to meet

and spend time with two organic rice farmers to learn about their important conservation work. Canoeing and kayaking the bottomland hardwoods of Trinity River NWR was definitely a highlight, as was meeting Secretary Sally Jewel and having her join the GAs in a Zumba for Fitness & Conservation session.

*Green Ambassadors help Anahuac NWR band waterfowl.* USFWS



### Environmental Education Program R1 / Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, (NWR) Olympia, Washington

Nisqually NWR partnered with Friends of Nisqually NWR and Nisqually River Foundation to employ Davy Clark as a full-time education coordinator. The education program was coordinated by AmeriCorps Volunteers for many years prior. AmeriCorps Volunteer Danika Didur-Tate also served in the education program through a partnership with the Friends of Nisqually NWR and the Washington Service Corps/AmeriCorps. Directing 35 Refuge Volunteers, they provided programming for 8,500 students, teachers, and parents from 170 education groups participating in refuge field trips during the year. They delivered 10 teacher trainings for 179 educators including "Growing Up Wild" workshops for Pre-K educators in partnership with the Chehalis Basin Education Consortium. Davy worked with partners on the specialized education program, "Eye on Nature," targeting underserved students and schools. He also initiated a partnership with the Nisqually Indian Tribe's Head Start program to deliver offsite Pre-K programming that included 6 classroom visits for 40 tribal youth.



*Davy Clark providing students an orientation to the Refuge.*



*School group on the Twin Barns Observation Platform.*



*Learning about baiting.*

### Steve Harvey Mentoring Program

#### R2 / Regional Office Partner Program: Law Enforcement, Diversity and Civil Rights, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Dallas, Texas

For the third year, Service staff partnered with the Steve Harvey Foundation to provide activities and leadership for Harvey's Mentoring Weekend in the Dallas area. During this 6-day interactive program, 100 underserved young men gathered in Dallas for a transformative mentoring camp experience, which included learning to fish for and eat catfish. Steve Harvey, with a variety of male mentors, provided guidance in introspective sessions and outdoor activities to navigate adolescent issues, share the principles of manhood, focus on dream building, and develop life skills.

### Learning in the Outdoor Classroom

#### R3 / Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Zimmerman, Minnesota

Students from Princeton Elementary School spend time in the refuge's outdoor classroom in all seasons as part of regular, curriculum-based learning field trips led by refuge staff. During January's trip, the students visited different ecosystems in search of animal habitats, where sunny blue skies formed the ceiling of their classroom and wooded trails and sandy fields formed the floor. They found animal tracks in some remaining snow, sand, and frozen soil, along with various scat piles and a painted turtle shell, all of which provided clues to how animals live in each area. Prairie grasses and plants revealed a variety of seeds – food for hungry critters. Two adult bald eagles visited the classroom and soared high overhead. Students discovered a beaver lodge in a pool, with beaver-cut trees nearby. The woods walk revealed a small stream and many animal homes, including squirrel and bird nests, woodpecker holes, and dens under fallen logs.



*First-grade students wonder how a painted turtle shell they found ended up in a sandy field. Dean Kleinhans/USFWS*



### Getting Wild in the Classroom

#### R4 / Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Gulf Shores, Alabama

Getting Wild in the Classroom brings to life key biological concepts while introducing students to the Bon Secour NWR. The program begins with an inquiry-based exploration that takes place in the classroom focusing on the Alabama beach mouse, the loggerhead sea turtle, and the coastal habitats they depend on. Students then take a field trip to the refuge where the concepts are reinforced with six hands-on activities. The curriculum incorporates five of Alabama's core science objectives for fourth-grade students—helping science come alive—while meeting classroom objectives. Exploring and learning about their coastal backyard helps build environmental awareness and stewardship. One station entails seining in Little Lagoon, a favorite among students, where they identify vertebrate and invertebrate specimens retrieved from the nets (see photo on page 10). Participation in this inaugural event included 150 students from the all six fourth-grade classes at Gulf Shores Elementary School.

*Fourth-grade student shows off her shrimp catch. USFWS*



*Students search for evidence of animals living near a pond. Dean Kleinhans/USFWS*

### James River Ecology School

#### R5 / Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Charles City, Virginia

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the James River Association collaborated for the third year to host the James River Ecology School on Presquile Island. The program hosted more than 1,300 K-12 students during their fall and spring seasons. The Ecology School provided hands-on, interdisciplinary learning experiences, connected to the Virginia Standards of Learning, to underserved schools and extracurricular youth groups in the James River watershed. Education programs included in-classroom experiences as well as day and overnight programs. Students participated in field-based learning on watershed concepts, river explorations through paddling, multiple sciences, and Virginia cultural studies. When not exploring the island's outdoor classrooms, students continued to learn about conservation in the Ecology School's state-of-the-art, green indoor classroom and bunkhouse. During their time at the James River Ecology School, students not only connected to nature, but left Presquile Island inspired with a contagious smile.



*James River Ecology School students assist the James River Association and refuge staff in trawling for fish and other aquatic species.*

### Monarch Mania Event

#### R6 / Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Stafford, Kansas

The Monarch Mania Event is held annually each September and coincides with the butterflies' southward migration across Kansas toward Mexico. In recent years, declines in North American populations of monarchs lead to international conservation initiatives. During Monarch Mania, all youth, their parents, and visitors get to help capture, tag, and release monarchs, and often can view several of the insect's life stages. Participation during the 2015 event included 116 people, the majority whom were youth. A total of 216 monarchs were caught and tagged during the one-day event. In addition to monarch tagging, kids are provided an educational perspective on monarch conservation and given a chance at the craft table to create their own butterfly-related artwork.

*Young helper assists with monarch tagging. Robert Mansheim/USFWS*



**Outdoor Days  
R7 / Fairbanks Fish & Wildlife Field Office,  
Fairbanks, Alaska**

Outdoor Days is a three-day outdoor education program in Fairbanks, Alaska sponsored by the Service and the Bureau of Land Management. More than 16,000 urban sixth-grade students, along with their teachers and parents, have attended this event since its inception in 1991. The program consists of instructional stations on each of three trails with the themes of Wildlife, Earth Science, Fisheries, Human Relationships with their Environment, and Forests. Over 65 scientists from federal and state agencies, private industry, resource consulting companies, and the University of Alaska presented engaging hands-on science activities in these topic categories. Participation in Fairbanks Outdoor Days helps to plant the seeds of respect and responsibility for the natural world in local youth, builds career awareness, fosters an appreciation and understanding of the work of science and resource management agencies, and develops positive public relations with the Fairbanks community.



*Learning Casting Techniques at the 2015 Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity's Conclave in Little Rock, Arkansas. Bob Pos/USFWS*

**Sigma Conclave Youth Outdoor Activities  
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Falls Church, Virginia**

*I Am My Brother's Keeper* was the theme at the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity's 2015 Conclave in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Service, along with the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center, hosted outdoor recreation activities for 150 students participating in the Conclave. Sigma attendees were taught the fundamentals of archery, participated in a basic fishing clinic, and enjoyed a tour inside the nature center. The activities provided young people, ages 8 to 18, the opportunity to learn about the benefits of being outdoors and careers in wildlife conservation, as well as gain a better understanding of the Service's conservation work. The outing was made possible through the support of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.



*Students excavate a simulated archaeological site at an activity station.*



*Students learn first-hand the effects of climate on boreal forest ecology.*

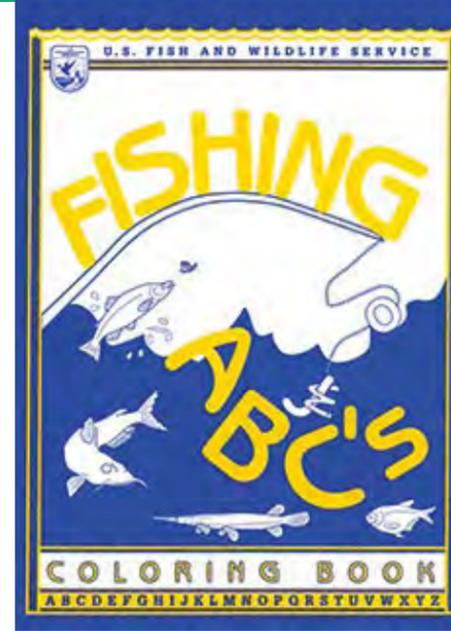
**Bioblitz  
R8 / Antioch Dunes National Wildlife  
Refuge (NWR), Antioch, California**

Citizen scientists gathered for the first Bioblitz at Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). For 2.5 hours, more than 50 participants helped document every living species on the refuge, which is usually closed to the public. They photographed species using the iNaturalist app with smart phones or digital cameras while interacting with experts. The event attracted seasoned nature enthusiasts and young people interested in seeing nature in their hometown. By the end, youth were teaching their older peers how to use the app while learning about unique species at the Refuge. Participants could identify species; the iNaturalist crowdsourcing community verified the identification, at which point, the data became research-grade. The

NWR partnered with local organizations, Nerds for Nature and the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society. Nerds for Nature displayed collected photos and asked the citizen scientists about the plants and animals they found. See more than 100 species they documented at <http://tinyurl.com/zzd93xw>.



*Enthusiastic entomologist taking photographs of harvester ants. Carmen Minch/USFWS*



*Fishing ABC's, one of many educational products now available on the FAC website.*

**Online Fish and Aquatic Conservation  
Educational Resources  
HQ / Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation  
(FAC), Falls Church, Virginia**

Whether interested in educational activities and games that reach a wide range of age levels or links to outdoor skills websites, the FAC education page has what you are looking for. The site includes programmatic fact sheets, information on how to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species, where to find nearby FAC field stations, how to become a fisheries Friend or volunteer, and links to Service employment opportunities. Visit the page at <http://go.usa.gov/3fdKT>.

**Incorporating Traditional Values into  
Sustainable Natural Resource  
Management in Guatemala  
HQ / International Affairs, Falls Church,  
Virginia**

The Service provided funding support for the Organization for Nature Conservation and Community Development's (ORCONDECO) Environmental-Cultural Education program that incorporates traditional Maya-Q'echi values to promote sound natural resource management. It has reached more than 2,200 Maya-Q'echi youth in 56 primary schools in a site designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. This area has suffered from social and economic pressures that threaten not only biodiversity, but also local people's way of life. The Service recognized ORCONDECO's efforts in 2015 when Assistant Director for International Affairs, Bryan Arroyo, presented the co-founders with a Heroes of Conservation award. The Guatemalan Ministry of Education re-certified and re-accredited ORCONDECO's Environmental-Cultural Education Program, the first non-governmental organization-led education program in Guatemala to receive this status. Learn more about the program and its success here beginning on page 28 at <http://bit.ly/1zTXSKt> or in the Director's blog at <http://1.usa.gov/1FbJo05>.

*Girls from Xalaché school in front of a mural of environmental problems and solutions they presented to local authorities. Marleny Rosales/ORCONDECO*



**Conservation Leaders in the Caribbean  
Program  
HQ / International Affairs, Falls Church,  
Virginia**

In partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Service continues to support the Conservation Leaders in the Caribbean (CLiC) program, which provides an 18-month leadership training program at Grenada's St. George's University to 20 competitively selected, emerging Caribbean conservation professionals from 13 countries. The program provides training by qualified professionals through workshops, short courses, experiential project management and problem solving. Specific training activities include networking with peers and established conservation practitioners, and structured and hands-on training in vital skills such as conservation planning, conflict resolution, communications, and group facilitation, management, and leadership. Participants also receive one-on-one mentoring from professionals in the Caribbean region and internationally. In the fall of 2015, CLiC teams began addressing the following issues: invasive lionfish management in Columbia, mangrove restoration in Nicaragua, hawksbill turtle conservation in Grenada & Anguilla, wildlife trafficking in Bahamas and Trinidad, and parrotfish overfishing in Jamaica.



*Conservation Leaders in the Caribbean Fellows and Board members participate in leadership training. St. George's University/IFAW*



*Hawksbill turtle. USFWS*



Tamara Zeller, USFWS

### Urban Bird Treaty Program (UBT) HQ / Migratory Birds, Falls Church, Virginia

The UBT program is a unique, collaborative effort between the Service and participating U.S. cities to enhance urban areas for migratory birds that nest, overwinter, or pass through urban and suburban neighborhoods. The UBT emphasizes education and outreach activities and includes resources for constructing schoolyard and backyard habitat sites, educating citizens about birds and their conservation in an urban environment, and providing awareness and career development opportunities for young people. The program is active in 21 cities. The following example highlights the program's activities:

#### ■ Christmas Bird Count for Kids R7 / Regional Office

Dozens of kids and adults took to the Alaska Zoo trails to participate in Anchorage's sixth Christmas Bird Count for Kids—an event sponsored by the Alaska Zoo, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Audubon Alaska, and the Service in coordination with Boy and Girl Scout troops from around the city. In the spirit of the traditional Christmas Bird Count started by National Audubon Society 116 years ago, kids and adults learned how to identify common birds, compile data, and become citizen scientists. Participants were first divided into teams and then spent an hour with an experienced "bird leader" roaming the zoo trails. A tally and awards ceremony followed where a representative of each team read the results. All participants



Tamara Zeller, USFWS

received a birding journal to inspire these fledgling birders to continue counting on their own. Additional awards were given to the teams that counted the most birds and observed the highest species diversity. Despite the chilly temperatures, teams spotted 11 species of wild birds at the zoo, including common ravens, bohemian waxwings, black-capped chickadees, and golden crowned kinglets. Fun was had by all!



Black-capped chickadee. USFWS

### Leadership Congress HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and Conservation Legacy, a national youth service organization, hosted the inaugural Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress at NCTC in the summer of 2015. The Congress engaged nearly 100 Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian high school student conservation leaders representing 30 indigenous communities, many on or near Service and other public lands. The Congress encouraged students to focus on climate-related issues they were passionate about, and to champion strategies to address those issues.

Participating students will help ensure a healthy natural environment for their communities, many of which are heavily dependent on wildlife as an essential part of their traditional way of life. To learn more about the Congress see <http://tinyurl.com/zxwbrtw>.

*Inter-Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress students make a presentation on how their cultural traditions, such as traditional subsistence food systems, are responding to climate change.*



### (ACFF) Student Film Competition and Conservation Filmmaker Workshop (CFW) HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia

For 15 years ACFF has sponsored a national Student Environmental Film Competition with expert judges, travel to the festival, and an award ceremony. In 2015, 130 student films were submitted and 15 of them screened in Shepherdstown including at NCTC. Many of these student films highlight wildlife management, national wildlife refuges, and endangered species. For the last 10 years ACFF has also sponsored the CFW, and in 2015, 22 of the participants were youth and/or students 12 of whom are enrolled in university film programs and 1 high school student. Two students from underrepresented groups were awarded full scholarships. The workshop was held at NCTC and partners include the Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic. More information is available at: <http://conservationfilm.org/>



Transforming Youth Outdoors Homepage

### Transforming Youth Outdoors (TYO) Partnership HQ / National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

TYO curates, organizes, and maintains an ever-growing collection of online information and other resources to help program providers deliver best-in-class youth outdoor programming. The foundation of these resources comes from a collection of best practices from industry thought leaders, and the site is supported by 15 years of experience from Outdoor Outreach—one of the most successful regional outdoor youth engagement programs in the U.S. ([www.outdooroutreach.org](http://www.outdooroutreach.org)). Information is organized in an online platform that provides user-identified content in learning pathways that connect users to information, networks, professionals with similar interests, and other re-

sources. The Service is partnering with TYO to provide outdoor educators and teachers with a comprehensive set of tools and resources to support classroom and outdoor education about pollinators and more specifically monarchs. The path will help users easily integrate pollinator lesson plans, activities, and projects into classrooms or programs. Service educators are encouraged to become free members, utilize the pollinator pathway, and watch as new pathways on conservation careers and other resources are developed under our growing partnership. Learn more at <http://mytyo.org/>.

### Hands on the Land (HOL) HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia

HOL is a nation-wide network of partnerships among schools and federal public land sites focused on improving academic performance and building environmental literacy. With partnerships at nearly 200 sites from Alaska to Florida, HOL is essentially America's largest classroom. NCTC coordinates the HOL network for the Service in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF). HOL's partnerships deliver high-quality, sustained, outdoor K-12 education focused on public land natural and cultural resources conservation and management, and conservation careers. The Service's portion of the program is comprised of school partnerships at 18 national wildlife refuges, and one national fish hatchery. The Service expanded participation in HOL in FY 2015 by 50 percent, thanks in part to mini-grants from NEEF and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Learn more about HOL at [www.handsontheland.org](http://www.handsontheland.org).



Fourth Grade Pass



### Every Kid in the Park HQ / National Wildlife Refuge System, Falls Church, Virginia

The Every Kid in a Park initiative, launched by the White House in September 2015, is a government-wide initiative aimed at connecting all fourth graders to our federal lands and waters. One of the key components of the initiative is a free pass for fourth graders and their families to visit more than 2,000 federally managed land and water sites nationwide through August 2016. National Wildlife Refuge System HQ staff worked closely with Department of the Interior and other agencies' staff to develop the program, including the creation of the Fourth Grade Pass and an educational website to help educators and parents plan trips and locate available educational materials from the various agencies. Service offices also applied for 22 transportation grants provided by the National Park Foundation to host fourth graders at national wildlife refuges. Learn more at [www.everykidinapark.gov](http://www.everykidinapark.gov).

*Toni Westland at Ding Darling issuing a fourth-grade pass during National Public Lands Day.*





R4 /Elementary school students help plant milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants in western North Carolina. Gary Peeples/USFWS

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

### Environment for the Americas (EFTA) Latino Internship Program R1 / Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Sherwood, Oregon

In partnership with the EFTA, the Tualatin River NWR employed two Latina interns who worked to connect underserved Latino communities to nature through on- and off-refuge education and outreach programming. Additionally, the EFTA interns provided bilingual support for the Tualatin River Bird Festival, summer nature camp for youth, and volunteer recruitment at community events. More than 700 new youth and families were served by these efforts.

*Youth celebrate last day of summer nature camp with Environment for the Americas interns.*



### Girl Scouts Inspiring Fish Conservation R3 / LaCrosse Fish Health Center, Onalaska, Wisconsin

Girl Scout cadets Grace Amundson, Jennifer Hamann, and Amanda Clements worked with their troop leader and Service biologist Jennifer Bailey to develop outreach projects that had a positive and lasting effect on their community's youth. They chose to focus on nature, fishing, and the aquatic ecology of the upper Mississippi River and the LaCrosse area. The Scouts dedicated more than 150 hours to research and design, and created a group of inter-related tools, activities, and games that are interactive, educational, and fun for all ages. These resources will be used by the LaCrosse Fisheries Health Center's Visitor Center to help youth learn about the fish and mussels of the upper Mississippi River and connect with fishing opportunities in their community.



*Troop leader Kim Amundson presents the Silver Awards to the cadets.*

Nick Berndt/USFWS



*These children tried their luck in the fishing pond designed by the cadets.*

Nick Berndt/USFWS

### Pollinator Garden Partnership Program R4 / Asheville Field Office, Asheville, North Carolina

In the wake of the Service's commitment to monarch butterfly conservation, the Asheville Field Office's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program worked with a local monarch conservation organization to provide funding and to reach out to rural schools and businesses as sites for pollinator gardens, which included planting milkweed. Over the course of the spring and summer, volunteers, including school children of all ages, planted numerous pollinator gardens across western North Carolina.



*Digging a new plant hole.*

Gary Peeples/USFWS





Refuge staff and U.S. Coast Guard Academy cadets pose after breaking ground on a new native plant pollinator garden at Outer Island.



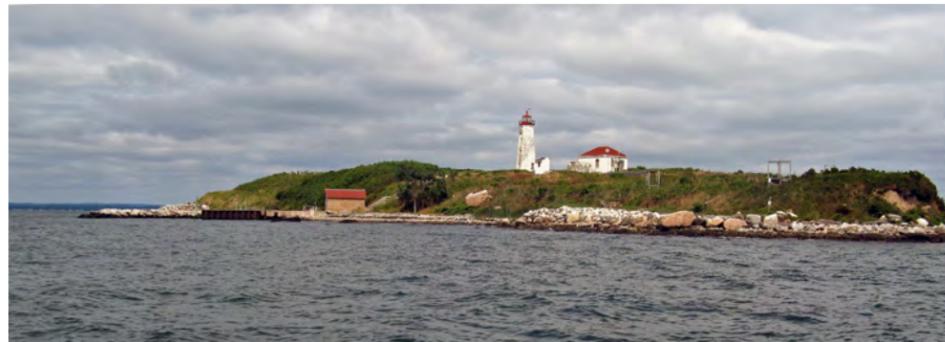
Roseate Terns.  
Alcides Morales/USFWS



Refuge volunteer "Island Keeper" Interns Morgan Allen and Audrey Wiese.

**Youth Volunteers Provide Critical Work in Long Island Sound R5 / Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Westbrook, Connecticut**

Youth volunteers provided a variety of services to the Refuge throughout 2015. Early in the spring, a crew of college students from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy helped staff break ground for a new pollinator garden of native plants at Outer Island. Funded entirely by a private donation, the garden helps pollinators and educates visitors on native species. At Falkner Island, a Boy Scout crew from Guilford prepared nesting habitat by setting up specialized nesting boxes in anticipation of the arrival of 6,000 common and 100 roseate terns that call the island home for the summer months. Over the summer, volunteer "Island Keeper" interns were stationed at Calf, Sheffield, and Outer islands performing work in habitat management, invasive species removal, bird surveys, environmental education, interpretive tours, maintenance, outreach, and banding of common and roseate tern chicks.



Falkner Island. USFWS



Boy Scout volunteers installing specialized nesting boxes for the federally endangered roseate tern at Falkner Island.

**National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) R6 / Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Pleasanton, Kansas**

An AmeriCorps crew serving with the NCCC – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Corps, stationed in Kansas City, provided a day of volunteer work on Marais des Cygnes NWR. NCCC-FEMA Corps provides young men and women, ages 18-24, the opportunity to work directly with FEMA in emergency management and disaster recovery. In addition to their NCCC "day job," the program encourages teams to do additional Independent Service Project weekend volunteering. The crew contacted the Refuge, where they spent a day addressing one of the Refuge's hazards by removing some of the miles of rusty barbed wire criss-crossing forests and field edges. The experience led to further conversations with the NCCC program administrators and refuge managers regarding potential future NCCC crew assignments.



National Civilian Community Corps helps out on Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge.



From left, Byron Nicholai, Yup'ik; Haley Fischer, Inupiat; Interior Secretary Sally Jewell; Secretary of State John Kerry; James Chilcote, Gwich'in Athabaskan; and Griffin Plush. U.S. State Department

**Arctic Youth Ambassadors R7 / Office of External Affairs, Anchorage, Alaska**

This program brings together diverse youth from across Alaska to serve as ambassadors for their communities and country in building awareness at home and abroad about life in the Arctic. Over the course of two years, which coincide with the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the youth ambassadors will share both their local perspective on Arctic issues and priorities, and new knowledge they will gain by engaging with partners and leaders from around the world. They'll add their voices and solutions to a global conversation about

how to sustain communities, cultures, and the environment in a changing Arctic. Follow their lives and stories here and across social media by tracking #ThisArcticLife #USArctic Youth or on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/zzhvlko>. The Arctic Youth Ambassadors program was established by the Service and U.S. Department of State in partnership with the nonprofit partner Alaska Geographic.



The Arctic Youth Ambassadors explore Portage Valley and Portage Glacier on the Chugach National Forest.



Ambassador Marianna Larsen (pictured at right) was recently featured on Alaska's Spirit of Youth radio series for campaigning against drug use in her hometown. Listen to her story here: <http://bit.ly/1OSieyM>.

Reth Duir (pictured left) hails from Anchorage, Alaska where he is pursuing elementary education at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

**Hope Services Community Access Network  
R8 / Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, Alviso, California**

Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) partners with Hope Services Community Access Network, which provides increased inclusive community membership for each person they support. Hope Services helps individuals with developmental disabilities become participating members of their communities. Their members provide valuable services, from industrial labors to environmental restoration. At Don Edwards, members completed a variety of tasks including shoreline clean-up, routine maintenance of park signs and benches, brush and weed clearing, and invasive species control. Hope Services members also have opportunities to take educational excursions with biologists and volunteers. These excursions

included tours of levees and marshland habitats, a hike of the new Devil's Slide trail, educational programs about the wetlands around the bay, and a trip to see elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Parks. Aside from tasks they complete, refuge staff has seen participants' enthusiasm and diligence bring joy to those who work or volunteer at the Refuge.

*Hope Services members pose in the butterfly garden at the environmental education center. USFWS*



*Girl Scouts and conservation leaders celebrate monarchs at San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Kayt Jonsson/USFWS*

**Girl Scouts Conserve Monarch Butterflies with Conservation Leaders from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico  
HQ / International Affairs,  
Falls Church, Virginia  
R8 / San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex Headquarters,  
San Diego, California**

One of the highlights of the 2015 meeting of the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management ([www.trilat.org](http://www.trilat.org)) in San Diego, California, was a visit to the San Diego NWR Complex. At the Refuge, a group of enthusiastic Girl Scouts joined Service Director Dan Ashe and conservation professionals from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico to plant native milkweed and other plants to help monarch butterflies and other pollinators that depend on these plants for food and shelter. The Girl Scouts, most of whom were from Mexico, formed a color guard and presented the flags of Mexico, the United States, and Canada to welcome the conservation leaders to the Refuge. This special day instilled faith in all participants that future generations will value and sustain wildlife and wild places. Learn more in Director Ashe's blog: <http://1.usa.gov/1HeUvn7>.



*Monarch butterflies. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS*



**Career Choices for Budding Conservation Professionals  
HQ / Budget, Planning, and Human Capital (BPHC), Falls Church, Virginia**

Spring was a season for growth and renewal with the revitalization of HQ's "Bring Your Child to Work Day" Program. The program hosted more than 20 youth, ages 3 to 16, engaging them in educational and interactive opportunities designed for the next generation of budding conservation professionals. Volunteer staff from most HQ program offices helped the visiting youth better understand the importance of connecting with nature and exposed them to many interesting conservation career choices. Highlights included a show-and-tell about confiscated animal products, such as elephant ivory and stolen ocean coral, and presentations on how the threat of wildlife crimes, like international poaching and wildlife trafficking rings, impact the future of the world's populations of elephants, tigers, rhinos, and many other species. Attending youth also learned about conserving our nations' imperiled species and their habitats, and they toured a local pollinator garden where they were encouraged to get outdoors and explore in their own backyards.



*Butterfly Magic.*



*Career Wheel.*



**Working Together for Conservation and Education  
HQ / Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation (FAC), Falls Church, Virginia**

Between 2 and 3,000 Girl Scouts and their families from the Washington D.C. area took part in Girl Scout Day at the National Air & Space Museum, Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. The Service's FAC, Endangered Species, Migratory Birds, and Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, and senior Girl Scout volunteers staffed educational booths during the event. Activities included fish and aquatic invasive species identification, name the animal tracks, endangered wildlife species games, and information on migratory birds, pollinators, and refuges.

*Stephanie Rickabaugh, Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program-Coastal Impact Assistance Program, and daughters volunteer to staff a Service table. USFWS*





HQ /Directorate Fellow, Dana Malave Miller, taking a break from her fellowship project of overseeing the refuge volunteer program to explore Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Missouri

## 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.

Young people are the conservation leaders of tomorrow, and through a variety of employment programs, qualified young people are prepared and given opportunities to enter careers in conservation. Using a variety of employment authorities, and working with 94 non-profit partners, the Service employed 4,174 youth ages 15–35 in FY 2015. The following activities highlight key employment efforts.

### Regional Workforce Recruiters HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management

The Service employs nine workforce recruiters (one in HQ and one in each region) to work together with hiring officials, human resource specialists, and partners to execute strategies that reach targeted groups of women, minorities, and people with disabilities to increase the pool of qualified diverse candidates from which the Service fills vacancies.

### Partnership Employment

Ninety-four nonprofit organizations—working in partnership with field stations, regional, and headquarters’ offices—employed over 1,200 youth, more than a quarter of the youth who worked on Service-related projects in FY 2015. Some of these positions involved 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. Please see the side bar below for a list of our youth employment partners in FY 2015.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Youth Employment Partners

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Alaska Science and Engineering Program                       | Native Village of Eyak   |
| American Conservation Experience                             | Northland College  |
| American Fisheries Society                                   | Northwest Youth Corps  |
| African Aquatic Conservation Fund                            | Northwood’s Stewardship Center   |
| American Littoral Society                                    | Ohio River Foundation  |
| AmeriCorps   | Ohio Wesleyan University   |
| Arizona Game and Fish Department                             | Oregon State University  |
| Arrupe Corporate Work Study Program                          | Providence Department of Parks and Recreation                            |
| Chicago Botanic Garden                                       | Refuge Friends Inc.  |
| Christopher Newport University                               | Rutgers University   |
| City of Chesapeake   | Saint Michaels College   |
| City of Kaktovik   | San Diego State University   |
| Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society                              | Sea to Shore Alliance  |
| Collaborative for Regional Educational Services and Training | Seney Natural History Association  |
| Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa                          | Shepherd University  |
| Conservation Legacy  | Southwest Conservation Corps   |
| Ding Darling Wildlife Society                                | Southwestern Oklahoma State University                                   |
| Fairfax County, Virginia                                     | St. Joseph the Worker Corp   |
| Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.                  | St. Marks Refuge Association   |
| Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge                  | Student Conservation Association   |
| Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge               | Supporters of St. Vincent NWR Inc.                                       |
| Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge                  | Tanana Chiefs Conference   |
| Friends of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge                | The Corps Network  |
| Friends of Pool 9  | The Nature Conservancy   |
| Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge               | University of Tennessee - Martin   |
| Friends of Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge              | University of Alaska SE  |
| Friends of St Croix Wetland Management District              | University of Delaware   |
| Friends of St. Catherine Creek                               | University of Georgia  |
| Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge           | University of Georgia - Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources |
| Greening Youth Foundation                                    | University of Maine  |
| Groundwork Denver  | University of Maine - Sparrow Research                                   |
| Habitat Forever  | University of Massachusetts  |
| Ilisagvik College  | University of Tennessee at Martin  |
| Job Corps  | University of Texas- Marine Science Institute                            |
| Maine Natural History Observatory                            | University of Vermont  |
| Meade Natural Heritage Association                           | University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point                                  |
| Michigan Audubon Society                                     | Upper Tennessee River Roundtable   |
| Mile High Youth Corps  | U.S. Forest Service  |
| Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society                            | USDA APHIS Wildlife Services   |
| Missouri Career Center                                       | Utah State University  |
| Montana Conservation Corps                                   | Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries                         |
| National Audubon Society                                     | Washington Conservation Corps  |
| National Fish and Wildlife Foundation                        | West Bay Collaborative   |
| National Great Rivers and Research Educational Center        | Western New Mexico University  |
| National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration              | Wisconsin’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation                        |
| National Wildlife Refuge Association                         | Juneau County  |
|  | YMCA of Klamath Falls  |

**Tribal Youth Environmental Summer Camp R2 / Regional Office Partner Program: Law Enforcement, Diversity and Civil Rights, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Albuquerque, New Mexico**

A crew of eight Native American youth spent time at Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, along with Chris Kitcheyan, Supervisory Fish Biologist with the Service's New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, assisting in a variety of projects such as building trails to groundwater monitoring wells, building clean ups, community outreach, and mural painting. The crew was part of the La Plazita Native American Urban Corps, which provides learning opportunities to native youth, ages 16 to 25, as they work on conservation projects on Tribal and Ancestral lands and waters. Supported by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and a \$25,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, other partners included Conservation Legacy and the La Plazita Institute.



2015 Tribal Youth Environmental Summer Camp participants learn about water resources and fish shocking with the Service's Fisheries Office.



2015 Tribal Youth Environmental Summer Camp participants paint a mural.

**Monarch Conservation Intern R3 / Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Brussels, Illinois**

A partnership among Two Rivers NWR, Student Conservation Association, and the City of St. Louis's Sustainability Director provided an opportunity for Monarch Conservation Intern Elizabeth Ward to support Milkweeds for Monarchs: The St. Louis Butterfly Project. Since June 2015, the Milkweeds for Monarchs team created 24 monarch gardens at St. Louis City schools, conducted a workshop for educators and Neighborhood Stabilization Officers, and reached more than 150,000 people through direct engagement, publications, social media, and exhibits. Ward conducted outreach and support activities throughout the summer. The project received national attention, especially since Mayor Slay helped launch the Mayors' Monarch Pledge with the National Wildlife Federation. Milkweeds for Monarchs: The St. Louis Butterfly Project is a platform to promote urban monarch conservation successes and is featured in multiple Service publications. To learn more please see: <http://tinyurl.com/odpyf5m>, and <http://tinyurl.com/orzo59u>.

*Monarch Conservation Student Conservation Association Intern Elizabeth Ward assists with planting a pollinator garden in St. Louis, Missouri.* USFWS



**AmeriCorps Member Emily Peters Makes a Difference in West Virginia R5 / West Virginia Field Office (WVFO), Elkins, West Virginia**

The WVFO established a cooperative agreement with the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area in 2009 to receive an AmeriCorps member to support the Endangered Species and Partners for Fish and Wildlife programs, assist with education and outreach events, and engage in a variety of other habitat conservation activities. During 2015, the WVFO's AmeriCorps member Emily Peters strengthened environmental education and outreach programs and connected local communities to nature, increasing environmental awareness to meet the national education and outreach priorities of the Service's mission. She also coordinated volunteers to assist with large-scale events focused on endangered and non-native invasive species, developed partnerships with local conservation organizations and agencies to expand outreach goals, and formed lasting positive relationships for future collaborative projects.



AmeriCorps member Emily Peters engages elementary students about the importance of pollinators at the Mountain State Forest Festival.

*Salmon Camp Director Kari Eschenbacher reconnects with a former camper at North Star Elementary School in Kodiak, Alaska.* Elizabeth Ridgeway/Kodiak Island Borough School District



*Tewaukon Prairie Habitat Restoration.*

**Tallgrass Prairie Restoration for Birds and Butterflies R6 / Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Cayuga, North Dakota**

The Tallgrass Prairie Restoration project involves restoring more than 1,200 acres of rare tallgrass prairie habitats with a diverse mix of native grasses and wildflowers for grassland nesting birds and a whole suite of prairie insects. The Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) helped restore over 300 acres of tallgrass prairie habitat. Armed with drip torches and chain saws, the MCC crew assisted refuge staff removing overgrown woody vegetation and invasive grasses, restoring the site to a kaleidoscope of colorful wildflowers and tall prairie grasses. The MCC crew spent many hours hand collecting seed from native grasses and wildflowers to restore prairie areas that will now host a wide diversity of prairie birds, butterflies, and other prairie species.



**An Army of Refuge Youth Rangers Mentoring Younger Generations R7 / Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Kodiak, Alaska**

Each summer, Kodiak NWR employs a small army of seasonal staff, volunteers, and Student Conservation Association Interns to engage over 3,000 youth in more than 100 ranger-led education and interpretive programs. This army of youth rangers helps connect 3-5 year-olds and their families to nature. They lead the week-long salmon-themed day camps for pre-K to middle school, as well as mentor and lead five teens on a Youth Conservation Corp Crew for a nine-week learn/work experience. Their leadership and passion is inspiring younger generations to conserve nature. One of these summer rangers, Salmon Camp Director Kari Eschenbacher, spends the rest of year as substitute teacher at North Star Elementary in Kodiak, Alaska.

*Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Infographic*



**Conservation 4 Youth Summer Internship Program (C4Y)  
HQ / Budget, Planning, and Human Capital (BPHC), Virginia**

Over the past three summers, employees from the Service's program offices in HQ have provided 25 at-risk youth the chance to gain confidence through work experience, network opportunities, and mentoring—all while learning the value of conservation and connecting with nature. Two youth have been placed in permanent positions in the Service. Envisioned by the Service's Assistant Director of Budget, Planning and Human Capital, this summer's award-winning C4Y Program expanded its partnership to include youth from Fairfax County's Educating Youth through Employment Program (EYE) and Fairfax Families4Kids, and DC's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and BEST Kids Program. Highlights included building a pollinator garden, working on a conservation stewardship project at Rock Creek Park, enjoying a visit to Patuxent Research Refuge's whooping crane sanctuary, and the chance to get up close and personal with Mr. Hoots, an owl in a local wildlife rehabilitation program. C4Y gave Service volunteers the opportunity to foster a connection between nature and young people while making a committed difference in the world around them.



*Conservation 4 Youth participant learns about birds of prey.*

*Conservation 4 Youth team service project photo.*



**MENTOR-Manatee  
HQ / International Affairs,  
Falls Church, Virginia**

In collaboration with two non-governmental organizations, Sea to Shore Alliance and African Aquatic Conservation Fund (AACF), the Service's Africa Program launched MENTOR-Manatee, a fellowship program to develop a network of emerging African manatee conservationists. Throughout the two-year program, Fellows received training in manatee field research techniques and developed individual research projects. MENTOR-Manatee is part of the Service's MENTOR initiative, which focuses on developing strong, transdisciplinary teams of emerging African conservation leaders to tackle critical conservation challenges (<http://tinyurl.com/jpdfcu3>). The MENTOR-Manatee team, led by the world's leading African manatee expert, Dr. Lucy Keith Diagne, is made up of eight conservationists from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gabon. The team collects data on African manatees (*Trichechus senegalensis*), which is then used for future conservation actions for this rapidly declining species. Direct conservation initiatives like MENTOR-Manatee are integral to help identify and tackle both current and future threats facing manatee populations.



*The MENTOR-Manatee team of fellows. Luey Keith Diagne*



*2015 Directorate Fellows get an archery lesson while learning about the "Big 6" refuge activities during their orientation at the National Conservation Training Center.*

**Directorate Resource Assistant Fellows Program (DFP)  
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC),  
Shepherdstown, West Virginia  
HQ / Budget, Planning, and Human Capital (BPHC),  
Falls Church, Virginia  
HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce  
Management (ODIWM), Falls Church, Virginia**

The Service DFP provides college students 11 weeks of full-time work on individualized Service-identified and supervised projects that meet rigorous qualification criteria. The DFP is part of an aggressive recruitment campaign to increase the participation of minorities and women in the Service's applicant pools. Successful completion of the program's summer fellowship requirements and graduation from an accredited college or university 4-year or higher degree program, earns Fellows direct hiring status with the Service. The DFP is implemented through a collaborative effort among the Service's Deputy Director, NCTC, BPHC, and ODIWM in partnership with the Student Conservation Association. Fifty-three fellows successfully completed their DFP summer internship in FY 2015. Since the program was piloted in 2014, 82 participants completed the 11-week fellowship; 55 are working on completing their degree requirements; 10 graduated and are looking for placements; and 17 were placed in permanent positions with the Service.



*USFWS staffers take three of the 2015 Directorate Fellows out for networking lunch.*

*2015 Directorate Fellows gather for a fireside chat and s'mores with inspirational FWS leaders during orientation at the National Conservation Training Center.*



**Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)**

Five hundred and forty-five high school students served in the YCC at the Service's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, regional offices, and Headquarters in Falls Church, VA in FY 2015. These summer jobs are available to students ages 15-18, and for many, it is the first paying job they have ever had. Service staff 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.

**Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) 2015 in Puerto Rico**

**R4 / Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), Boqueron, Puerto Rico**

The summer of 2015 was full of hard work and fun-filled activities for the YCC crews at the Vieques, Cabo Rojo, and Culebra Refuges. All 17 crew members worked hard conducting educational activities and beach clean ups, maintaining refuge facilities, and supporting greenhouse and reforestation projects. Besides working long days under the hot sun, the students participated in educational programs, community activities, an archery program, sea turtle monitoring, and field trips.

*Vieques National Wildlife Refuge Youth Conservation Corps 2015.*



*Culebra National Wildlife Refuge Youth Conservation Corps 2015.*



*Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge Youth Conservation Corps 2015.*

**Youth Conservation Corps (YCC): A Summer to Craft Skills**

**R4 / Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery (WCNFH), Jamestown, Kentucky**

Each summer, WCNFH provides summer employment to four local teenagers. With assistance from the local guidance counselor for the Russell County High School, teenagers that expressed a desire to investigate careers in resource management are selected to participate in the YCC program. The four teenagers spent eight weeks as valuable members of the hatchery staff, and they were involved in the hands-on, day-to-day operations of the hatchery including feeding fish, cleaning raceways, grounds keeping, building and equipment maintenance, and other fish production and distribution duties. The crew was also involved in trail construction and maintenance, and Wolf Creek's annual fishing derby. At the end of the summer, the YCC students left with a greater appreciation for the work required to keep a national fish hatchery operating smoothly.



*Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, 2015 Youth Conservation Crew.*



**Youth Conservation Corps 2015**

**R8 / San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, San Joaquin Valley, California**

For eight weeks each summer, YCC crews from the local community leave their mark on the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Collectively, they've spent hundreds of thousands of hours in the field sweating through the hot summer sun of the San Joaquin Valley. They had opportunities to develop work ethics and self-discipline. They learned the importance of working with others. And, they contributed to wildlife and habitat conservation. Among the



*The San Luis NWR Complex YCC crew works as a team to clear walking paths near the San Luis NWR visitor center. USFWS*

most shining outcomes from the YCC's presence here has been the individuals who went on to join the refuges conservation team, as FWS Pathway Interns, as the YCC Crew Leader, and even as a permanent refuge employee. Altogether, 106 young people were exposed to the outdoors and nature, to wildlife and their needs, and to a vast team of people working together toward common conservation goals—just as they are deciding which path they'll take into their future.

**Tribal Youth Conservation Corps HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC), Falls Church, Virginia**

**R2 / New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NMFWCO), Albuquerque, New Mexico**

FAC resumed the Tribal Youth Conservation Corps (TYCC) program in 2015 with the Southwest Region's NMFWCO collaborating with the Pueblo of Cochiti Department of Natural Resources to employ three Native American students. The students assisted with various projects including riparian restoration, indigenous medicinal plant species research, and population ecology. Plans for 2016 include development of new TYCC programs in several regions.

*The New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office tribal Youth Conservation Corps crew. USFWS*



**Pathways Programs**

The Service's Pathways Programs employed 259 students attending college or vocational schools in FY 2015. The Pathways Programs offer clear paths to federal internships for students from high school through post-graduate school and to careers for recent graduates, and provide meaningful training and career development opportunities for individuals who are at the beginning of their federal service. Students or recent graduates can begin their careers in the federal government by choosing the path that best fits their needs. The Pathways Programs include the following three components: the *Internship Program* is for current students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions from high school to graduate level; the *Recent Graduates Program* is for individuals who have graduated within the last two years from qualifying educational institutions or programs; and the *Presidential Management Fellows Program* is the federal government's premier leadership development program for individuals who have received a qualifying advanced degree within the preceding two years. For complete Pathways Programs information, please see <https://www.usajobs.gov/StudentsAndGrads/>.

*The New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Tribal Youth Conservation Corps crew helping with riparian work along the Santa Fe River. USFWS*



**Pathways Youth Internship Employment R1 / Hagerman National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Hagerman, Idaho**

Animal Caretaker, Jared Knott, began his work experience with the Service as a student intern at the Hagerman NFH in FY 2013-2014 through a cooperative agreement with the College of Southern Idaho. During his internship with the Service, Jared obtained a two-year associates degree at the College of Southern Idaho in aquaculture. The Hatchery hired Jared under the Pathways Recent Graduates Program in 2015 to assist with the production of 1.5 million steelhead trout, a Region 1 Recirculating Aquaculture System Pilot Project, and water quality monitoring of 17 spring sources. The hatchery plans to convert Jared to a full-time permanent position in the fall of 2016.



*Jared Knott, Animal Caretaker at Hagerman National Fish Hatchery.*





Fifth grade students from Petersburg, West Virginia, learn about bats and white-nose syndrome from the U.S. Forest Service and Americorps volunteers through Project Edubat. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

## Coordination, Communication, and Training

### Coordination and Communication

#### DOI Interagency Youth Team HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia

The Department issued *Order 3332 Engaging the Next Generation* along with general implementation, monitoring, and reporting guidance. In FY 2014 the Order instructed the Bureaus to build upon the outstanding work and programs already operating at local offices and units around the country. The Department also pursued a comprehensive strategy to encourage millions of young people to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. The Service stepped forward in response to requests from former Bureau Youth Task Force members to provide inter-bureau coordination for the initiative. Bureau representatives continue to meet voluntarily under the moniker DOI Interagency Youth Team to share information, foster understanding, and create efficiencies to plan and implement the Order. The Service compiles agendas beforehand, facilitates the meeting, and drafts and distributes minutes afterwards.

#### Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) Creates Meaningful Experiences in Nature HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, West Virginia

The CPWN-Working Group (CPWN-WG) continues to carry out its priority to address the American public's declining interactions with nature by creating opportunities for people to have enjoyable and meaningful experiences in the outdoors. The group coordinated with the Service's Monarch Initiative to fund 4 \$5,000 pollinator/monarch projects at 4 fish hatcheries. The Working Group continues to respond to the needs of the field in providing resources, technical assistance, and regional funding when possible, to ensure that our citizens, especially youth, have enjoyable and meaningful experiences in the outdoors.



The Connecting People with Nature Working Group nationally supports ongoing programs that connect people to nature, like Region 1's Take Kids to the Beach Day.

### Connecting People with Nature National Working Group Members

#### Regions

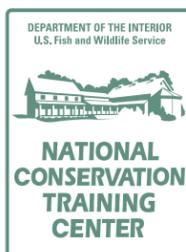
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**Youth Coordination Team (YCT)  
HQ / National Conservation Training  
Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown,  
West Virginia**

The YCT coordinates the Service's employment programs and activities for youth, ages 15-35. Key programs include Youth Conservation Corps, Pathways, 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 guidance to the development of departmental policy initiatives.



**VOICES (Visitor Outreach, Interpretation,  
Communication, and Educational  
Services)**

**HQ / National Conservation Training  
Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown,  
West Virginia**

VOICES is an electronic newsletter published bimonthly by the Division of Education and Outreach, with more than 400 subscribed Service employees. Its purpose is to distribute valuable information and resources to Service employees working to engage and educate young people. Topics include educational resources, professional development, conferences, programs, workshops, grants, and award recognition. 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. For archived issues see <http://tinyurl.com/h7pyrpf>.

**Training**

The Division of Education and Outreach Professional Development (PD) Branch builds the Service's capacity for Youth in the Great Outdoors programming by providing training and supporting communities of practice for Service employees and their partners in environmental education, youth outdoor skills, and youth leadership and supervision. Working with our partners, the PD Branch also provides web and social media tools to help youth learn about outdoor experiences, as well as conservation internships, job opportunities, and careers. The Branch manages grants, cooperative agreements, and intra-governmental agreements, and where applicable, builds diversity and inclusion into all trainings, programs, and products.

**Building Urban Wildlife Habitat with  
Youth and Creating a Schoolyard Habitat  
HQ / National Conservation Training  
Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV  
R2 / Regional Office, Albuquerque,  
New Mexico  
R8 / Ecological Services, Sacramento,  
California**

The Building Urban Wildlife Habitat with Youth and Creating a Schoolyard Habitat blended learning courses were successfully delivered in Austin, Texas in 2015, with a monarch habitat conservation emphasis. NCTC worked with Region 2 to sponsor the course and with Region 8 to provide instructors/presenters. Participants from multiple Service programs and eight non-profit partners, presented final class projects that demonstrated and integrated their knowledge gained from the training. NCTC provided small implementation grants for the class projects, which included creation of pollinator habitat, and integrating art and science activities focused on reaching underserved youth and community members.



Participants work on the class project to design pollinator habitat and places for outdoor learning at Lakeway Elementary School in Austin, Texas.

**OUT8046 Youth Outdoor Skills Webinar  
Series  
HQ / National Conservation Training  
Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown,  
West Virginia**

Working with federal and state agency staff, NCTC designed, developed and delivered 4 Best Practices webinars focused on engaging youth in the outdoors. Approximately 85 federal, state, and non-governmental organization staff from across the country participated in the webinars, which focused on:

- Primitive Skills—Incorporating Nature-based skills in Outdoor Programs with guest presenter Shea Hammond, Ozark Plateau National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).
- Junior Ranger Program with guest presenters Genie Moore, San Francisco Bay NWR; Julie Kahrnoff, The Wildlife Society; Lynnea Shuck, NWR Volunteer.
- Family Fishing Skills program with guest presenter Carl Richardson, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.
- Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism Partnership with State Agency Presenters Anne Glick, Florida; Shelly Plante, Texas; and Randy Babb, Arizona. The webinars are available for viewing on-line at <http://tinyurl.com/zj57cqu>.

**The Educator Climate & Conservation  
Colloquium (EC3)  
HQ / National Conservation Training  
Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown,  
West Virginia**

A new educator training program, offered by the Green Schools Alliance in partnership with NCTC, helps teachers prepare students for future conservation challenges and position their schools as beacons for conservation. EC3 brought 35 K-12 educators, staff and administrators together to develop a sustainability toolkit and begin building a network of colleagues to empower campus-wide sustainability efforts. The program was featured by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Participants shared with and learned from national experts in the field of sustainability education, facilities management, curriculum design, and behavioral change to bring sustainability to their campuses and classrooms. Keynote plenary sessions included Marcia Pradines, National Wildlife Refuge System Division Chief for Visitor Services and Communication; Jamie Cloud, The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education; Stephen Kellert, Yale University; Dr. David Orr, Oberlin College; and Richard Louv, the Children & Nature Network.

above right: Milkweed Seedpod.  
Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

below right: Eastern Bluebird.  
Phillip Westcott/USFWS



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Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

# Conclusion

This FY 2015 report demonstrates how deeply integrated youth programs are throughout the Service, from ecological services 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 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 future, complex conservation challenges becomes all the more important. The Service is proud of the comprehensive nature of our programs that reached millions of young people, their educators, and their families this year.

We will build on this success, improve our FY 2015 programs, and continue to share our experiences more broadly, always with the goal of involving more young people in the important mission we strive to meet: working with people to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



Tagging butterflies. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

*“It exposed me to an amazing network of extremely qualified and dedicated individuals who have inspired me to never give up in my environmental pursuits. They have taught me priceless things about the world I live in and just exactly what needs to be done to change it for the better.” – Jax*

*Jax Ingrassia  
Former participant and Faculty Assistant,  
Student Conservation Congress*



