



Spring 2010

BIG OAKS CONSERVATION SOCIETY



Newsletter of Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge & Big Oaks Conservation Society

President's Column

By Jim Leveille

Though very few of us make a living as farmers anymore, many of our actions are as closely tied to the changing seasons as they were when we were planting and harvesting for real. Early spring is our planting time on the refuge - the preparation for our summer and fall harvests: the Outdoor Women Program, Take a Kid Fishing Day, refuge tours, and youth turkey hunts. In our vigorous pursuit of making these events a success, it is sometimes easy to forget why we bother. Why do BOCS members invest their time and effort in Big Oaks? For many, it's simply the "Call of the Wild". Like Jack London's fictional canine, we have an unquenched desire to return or at least experience and preserve the uncivilized world. The refuge, with its vast, untrammelled acreage and natural settings serve this primal urge. For others, the memories and history of Old Timbers Lodge is the draw. Like a return to "The Wild" the Lodge conjures up memories of a bucolic past - a slower, agricultural time when sacrifice, discipline, and patriotism were the norm and not the exception. In a world of "non-joiners", as a member of BOCS, you've already made a statement about what's important to you. Your impulse to act on these beliefs is what makes BOCS a force for good on the refuge. Our alliance with Dr. Robb and the FWS staff and Lieutenant Colonel Sweeney and his range personnel is one, not only of personal friendships, but common goals as well. Whether the goal is preservation of wildlife or the preservation of Old Timbers, our organizations and members work together towards altruistic goals. So when your neighbors and friends complain about their hectic lives and busy schedules, and you're trying to squeeze in some BOCS volunteer activities, take half a second to congratulate yourself. While most of the rest of our community shun volunteer activities and get separation anxiety whenever their cable remote is out of sight, you are making a real difference on the refuge. OK, that's enough positive reinforcement. Now, it's time to get back to work. We'll see you this spring!

IN THIS ISSUE

• President's Column	1	• Take a Kid Fishing Day	5
• BOCS on Capital Hill	1	• The Perfect Fishing Hole...	6
• Refuge Manager's Corner	2	• JPG Heritage Partnership...	6
• New Staff at Big Oaks	3-4	• Park Ranger's Corner	7
• Cleaning Day at OTL	4	• BOCS Winter Speakers...	8
• 2010 Outdoor Women at Big Oaks	5		

BOCS on Capital Hill

Big Oaks Conservation Society Vice-President, Gary Stegner, attended the National Wildlife Refuge Association's Annual "fly-in" on March 9, 2010 in Washington D.C. The "fly-in" provided an opportunity for friends groups from throughout the country to update their respective Congressional delegations on national and local issues impacting National Wildlife Refuges. During the day long visit to Capitol Hill, Gary was able to brief Representative Baron Hill as well as members of the staffs of Senators' Lugar and Bayh.

Representative Hill was particularly interested in the BOCS issues and funding priorities for the BONWR. As explained to Representative Hill and the Lugar and Bayh staff members, the top priorities at BONWR are working with the Army to clear land for construction of a visitors center, obtaining funds for constructing a visitors center and repairing the dam at Old Timbers Lake. Appropriations requests have been submitted for all three projects and Representative Hill and Senators Lugar and Bayh have pledged their support for BONWR funding.

Refuge Manager's Corner

By Joe Robb

Hellos and Goodbyes..... We give Dan Matiatos best wishes on his promotion and new position as Deputy Refuge Manager of the Inland Northwest NWR Complex in Washington State. Dan will also serve as the Refuge Manager at Turnbull NWR; Dan started his new job in January. We welcome Mardean Roach as our new Administrative Technician. Mardean transferred from Crab Orchard NWR in March. We also welcome Rusty Pike as our new Maintenance Mechanic; Rusty transferred from Muscatatuck NWR in August 2009. We also have 2 new seasonal firefighters, Hillary Williams and Paul Killian. They started in February/March and will work until May. We also have 2 new interns at the refuge. Rachel Kappler started in February and will work until August; Tess Piening started in mid-March and will work until June. Profiles of these new employees at Big Oaks NWR are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

We have been busy surveying Crawfish Frogs again this year. We have been attaching radio transmitters (either internally through surgery or by an external belt, see photos) to follow these animals through their breeding season and back to their summer home. These frogs spend most of their time living in crayfish burrows, where they seek safety from predators and inclement weather (see Daryl Karns informative article in the 2003 Fall Newsletter and Beth Hauersperger's article in the 2004 Fall/Winter Newsletter on Crawfish Frogs). Andrew Hoffman, refuge intern and Hanover College Student, has been working with Perry Williams and Daryl Karns on videotaping behavior of these frogs at their burrow. One of the interesting things discovered about these frogs is that they are out of their burrows the majority of the time. This begs the question of how these frogs can physiologically withstand summer heat without desiccation.

We also conducted "occupancy" surveys during breeding season on fixed routes in potential frog habitat. Refuge volunteers and staff drove to a designated spot and listened for calling Crawfish Frogs at night (very fun!). I always enjoy spending these early spring nights out on the refuge, where owls and coyotes are my only companions, and the stars shine bright without any competing city lights. These locations will be used to model habitat selection and determine variables that could affect the use of grasslands by Crawfish Frogs (e.g., size of grassland, time since prescribed fire, other frog species present, etc.). We believe that these frogs depend on grassland habitats very similar to Henslow's Sparrows and Northern Bobwhite. We are also raising Crawfish Frog tadpoles to determine how water quality and density of tadpoles affect their maturation. One thing we have noticed is that

these frogs don't produce many young, probably because breeding ponds dry up, predators devour young tadpoles, and their tadpoles do not compete very well with other species' tadpoles.

We use these frog surveys just like our bird surveys—to improve our management of habitats at Big Oaks NWR. Our interest in Crawfish Frogs, as well as Henslow's Sparrows and rare plants are directly connected to our fire program's objectives. Paul Killian's Independent Study with Hanover College examined the effects of different timing of prescribed fire on tree mortality, and Luke Flory's study of the invasive stilt grass is directly related to these same management issues. All of these studies are connected to how we effectively manage grassland and forest habitats at Big Oaks NWR. We are currently drafting a Habitat Management Plan for the refuge; this plan will examine how we will manage each of the refuge's major habitats: grasslands, shrublands, and forest. We will use the data that we have gathered from previous studies on forest and grassland birds, Crawfish Frogs and subject matter experts to develop goals and objectives for the habitats that we manage.

We are also drafting a Visitor Services Plan that looks at how the refuge can best deliver high quality big 6 public use activities (environmental education, interpretation, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing) and other miscellaneous uses (e.g., mushroom, berries, and shed antler gathering). This plan will include plans for trails and facilities at Old Timbers Lake. After the plans are drafted we will get feedback from the public and stakeholders. We look forward to your ideas and your comments on both of these plans. As always, Big Oaks NWR is for you and our community and we want to become the best refuge that we can be!

**Northern
Crawfish
Frog
undergoing
surgery to
implant a
radio
transmitter.**

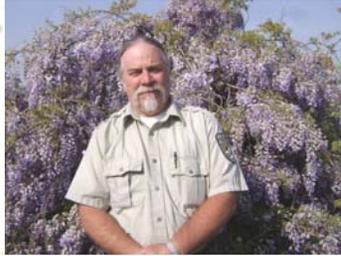


**Northern
Crawfish
Frog with
external
radio
transmitter
belt.**

New Staff at Big Oaks!

Frederick (Rusty) Pike - Maintenance Mechanic

After serving 4 years in the Navy (1973-1977), in October of 1977 he continued his Federal Service at Naval Ordnance Station in Louisville, Kentucky. Due to its closure, he transferred to Fort Campbell, Kentucky in 1997. In 2001 he accepted the Tractor Operators position at Muscatatuck NWR. After the retirement of the former Maintenance Mechanic at Muscatatuck NWR, he advanced to that position in 2004. In August of 2009 Rusty transferred to Big Oaks NWR, where he expects to stay until his retirement in the not too distant future. We are glad to welcome our first Maintenance Worker to Big Oaks!



worked on invasive species management and a variety of plant and animal surveys that I am sure will help me in my future career in the Fish and Wildlife Service. In my first summer as an intern, I was trained as a wildland firefighter and every summer since I have traveled the country on a diverse array of wildfire details. This winter I was able to finally take a position on the Big Oaks Fire Crew as a seasonal firefighter. Next fall, I will be taking my interests in fire ecology to graduate school at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. There I will be working at the Konza Prairie on plant community dynamics in response to a variety of prescribed fire regimes.

Fire Study:

I am currently in the process of publishing a study that was completed on the refuge on the mortality of early successional trees from a variety of fire regimes. We are interested in knowing exactly how different fire intensities and how the seasonality of the prescribed burn affected the mortality of these early successional trees. By modeling the mortality response of early successional trees, we will be better able to make the greatest use out of our fire program and preserve the habitat value of our grasslands on the refuge. At this point, we have noticed that trees are most affected by high intensity and short duration fires, low intensity and long duration fires, and fires that occur during the fall growing season.

Mardean Roach - Administrative Support Asst.



Big Oaks NWR has welcomed Mardean Roach to their staff. Mardean transferred to BONWR from Crab Orchard NWR in Southern Illinois as an administrative support assistant on March 1, 2010. Mardean spent eight years at CONWR working at the visitor center and in administration. In 2008 she also took on the duties of the administrative

officer for the Missouri Private Lands Office. Mardean holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Mid-Continent University in Mayfield, KY. Mardean has settled in Madison with her husband, John, and two kids, Corbin and Shayla. Please stop by her desk at anytime and say hello!

Hillary Williams - Seasonal Firefighter

Hillary moved to Madison in January 2009 from her hometown in Blaine, Minnesota. She grew up in a large family with 5 brothers and 3 sisters. She attended Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota and graduated with a Studio-Art degree.



While at Concordia she was a student athlete and Captain of the Women's soccer team where she still holds many of the scoring records. Hillary worked as an AD (Administratively Determined) employee during the spring of 2009 for the Big Oaks fire crew. She is currently working as a seasonal firefighter for Big Oaks. When she finishes here in May, she will be traveling to Nebraska to work at Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge for 3-6 months as a seasonal firefighter. When she returns from Nebraska she plans on taking some additional Biology courses to complete her Biology degree. Hillary enjoys fishing, hunting, and pottery, and is married to Perry Williams, wildlife biologist at Big Oaks.

Paul Killian - Seasonal Firefighter

I recently graduated from Hanover College in the spring of 2009, with a Bachelor's Degree in Biology. Shortly after graduating, I came back to Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge to work for my third summer as an intern. Working at Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge has afforded me an invaluable opportunity to work on projects with rare and endangered species such as the Cerulean Warbler and Henslow Sparrow. I have also



New Staff at Big Oaks! Continued...

Tess Piening - Intern

Hi, I'm Tess Piening, an intern at Big Oaks NWR this spring until mid-June. Home for me is Cincinnati, Ohio where I have one year left of school at the University of Cincinnati studying Biology with a concentration in Evolution & Ecology. I am also a member of the UC Mountaineering club (the university's oldest club!) where I participate in many club trips including whitewater rafting, backpacking, rock climbing, and caving. I have also been working for just over two years at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden as an educator. I primarily teach a program called "Nocturnal Adventures" in which school or scout groups spend the night at the zoo; I lead themed tours of the zoo and handle our "animal ambassadors". My favorite animals to handle are our barred owl Homer, American Alligators, and Dumeril's Ground Boa snakes. I have also been working at YMCA Camp Ernst in Burlington, Kentucky since I was 15; this summer I am returning to the camp staff as the "Adventure Trip Leader" where I'll lead teens in biking, rafting, and backpacking trips. Between all these activities, I make sure I have time to play with my dog Indi and spend time with my family. I am really enjoying working here at Big Oaks, and I'm looking forward to all the new things I will learn while I am here!



From Left: Rachel Kappler & Tess Piening

Rachel Kappler - Intern

I'm Rachel Kappler and I have been at Big Oaks since the end of February. I am from St. Johns, Michigan, just north of Lansing. I received my B.S. in Zoology at Michigan State University a few years ago and received my M.S. in Biology at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I studied white-footed mouse seed predation and population biology. I have been married to my husband Anthony for a while now, we have no kids, but have two cute cats, Kenya and Congo. I am planning on being at Big Oaks until August and possibly until the end of deer hunting season. I look forward to meeting some of you, especially at the Outdoor Women at Big Oaks event.

Overnight Stay/Spring Cleaning Day at Old Timbers Lodge

We will be repeating our spring cleaning effort at Old Timbers Lodge (OTL) again this year on Saturday, May 15, 2010 and highly encourage all members who are able to attend to do so. We are making enormous strides toward our goals of preserving and maintaining OTL. This is an important and fun activity open to all members.

This year, BOCS members will have the opportunity to spend Friday night before or Saturday night after the cleanup at the lodge. We will not provide food Friday evening. We will need to know if you are planning on spending Friday and/or Saturday night at the lodge, so sign up no later than May 11 with Carole Poffinbarger (513)868-7679 or poffin@fuse.net if you would like to spend the night. Remember that sleeping cots at the lodge are limited and that the old Army mattresses are all gone. Think of the lodge as a very nice tent with limited furniture. We recommend bringing air mattresses or folding cots. Water is also limited & not considered safe to drink. Bring your own water and food for Friday night. BOCS will provide donuts and coffee in the morning, a pizza lunch and burgers/hotdogs for dinner on Saturday for our volunteers.

Friday evening gate entry for those who have signed up to sleep over will need to be at Gate 6 from 5-6 PM, which is located at the refuge fence and 900 S. Michigan Road in Ripley County. The easiest way to get to Gate 6 is to take US 421 until reaching 900 S, turn west for approximately one mile – it ends at gate 6. Remember, you must already be a member and have signed up prior to the sleepover - no non-member guests overnight. Those who have not yet watched the refuge safety briefing video and signed for this calendar year will do so at the lodge.

On Saturday, we will be conducting a deep cleaning, and depending on the weather, a variety of other outside tasks. Gate entry for those arriving on Saturday morning will also be at Gate 6 from 7:15-8:00 AM. Pizza will be brought in for lunch, followed by a BOCS cookout at the end of the day. Especially for our newer members who have not yet had a chance to visit and work on the lodge, this is a great chance to come out, mingle with fellow BOCS members, and to make a real contribution to our lodge stewardship. Remember to sign up for either Friday or Saturday entry. We need to have a good headcount to purchase food. If you are coming just for the workday or have any other questions, please contact Bill Hughes at (812)689-5107 or whughes4@yahoo.com. Don't forget your work gloves. We'll see you there!

2010 OUTDOOR WOMEN at BIG OAKS

By Dianna Swinney

The 6th Annual Outdoor Women at Big Oaks (OWBO), hosted by the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge and Big Oaks Conservation Society will be held on Saturday, June 5, 2010. The activities of the day begin and end at the historic Old Timbers Lodge.

Outdoor Women at Big Oaks is an entire day dedicated to providing interactive educational opportunities and outdoor appreciation for women of all ages. Participants will have 21 different learning options to choose from this year. Every participant will attend 3 different classes. Topics include fly and regular fishing, canoeing, discovery nature walk, Life in a Creek, tree identification, and the ever popular Dutch Oven cooking. Because of the overwhelming interest last year, there will be two sessions of bead working offered - two different techniques. New to the offerings this year will be - How to Die (or not) in the Woods and Life in the Forest. One needs to attend these classes to see what they are all about!

The early registration fee remains \$45.00 (before May 1st) and \$30.00 for any young woman age 12 to 18 attending with a registered adult. Registrations received after May 1st will be \$50.00. Included in the registration fee are the 3 classes/workshops, continental breakfast, a box lunch, drinks and other refreshments throughout the day. Also included is a day pass to Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge.

Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for the raffle items or other merchandise. We have begun the collection of items for the raffle and there are some pretty exciting things available! Proceeds from the raffle go towards expenses for the event and other BOCS efforts, such as Old Timbers Lodge upkeep.

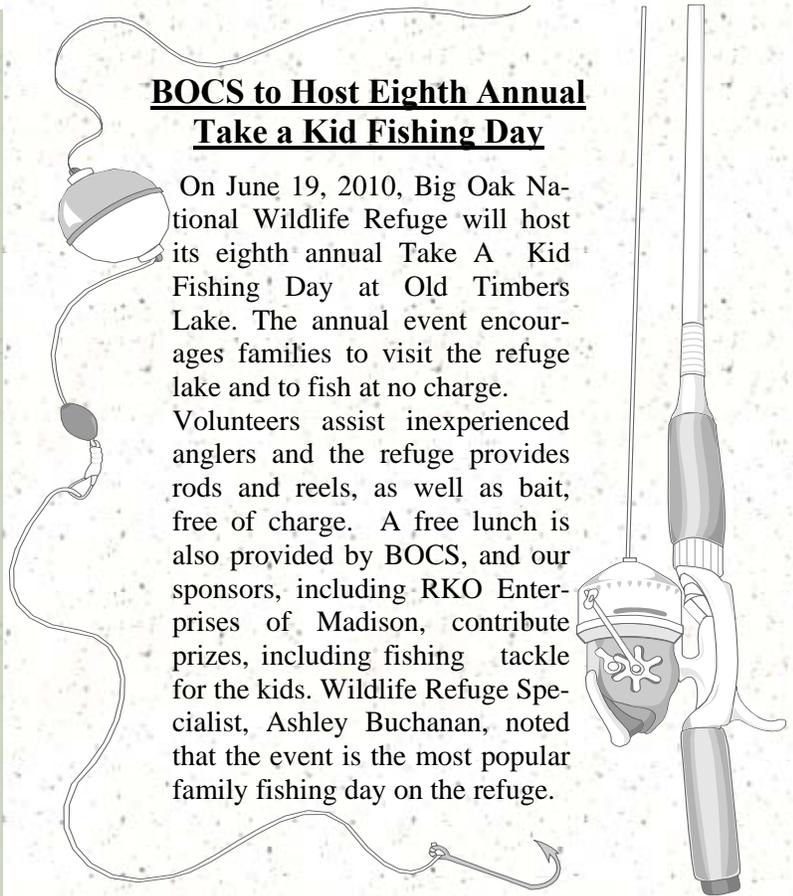
The OWBO committee is hoping for another fun, safe, educational and successful day. BOCS is blessed with individuals who give so freely of their time to make this event happen. The entire BONWR is a vital resource pledged to support and assist in the planning and delivery of the event. Ashley Buchanan and Beth Black have arranged for the instructors and class offerings and at the same time attended to many other tasks. For this, we thank you!

We are looking forward to seeing familiar faces and making new friends. If you or someone you know enjoys the outdoors and wants to try something new, OWBO 2010 is the place to be!

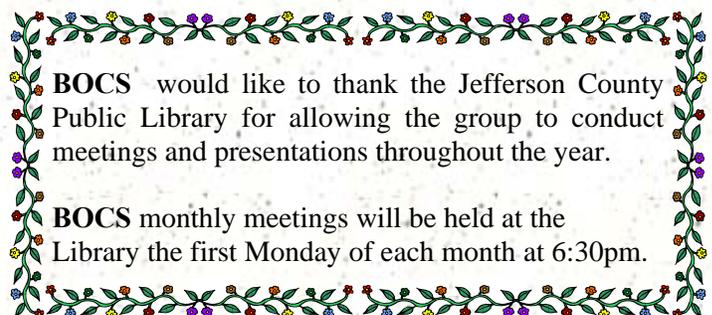
BOCS to Host Eighth Annual Take a Kid Fishing Day

On June 19, 2010, Big Oak National Wildlife Refuge will host its eighth annual Take A Kid Fishing Day at Old Timbers Lake. The annual event encourages families to visit the refuge lake and to fish at no charge.

Volunteers assist inexperienced anglers and the refuge provides rods and reels, as well as bait, free of charge. A free lunch is also provided by BOCS, and our sponsors, including RKO Enterprises of Madison, contribute prizes, including fishing tackle for the kids. Wildlife Refuge Specialist, Ashley Buchanan, noted that the event is the most popular family fishing day on the refuge.



BOCS Co-Chairperson for Deer Hunt Sales, Wilma Hughes, awaits the rush of noon-hour hunters. This year, BOCS cleared over \$2,000, despite overall hunter numbers were considerably lower than in years past.



BOCS would like to thank the Jefferson County Public Library for allowing the group to conduct meetings and presentations throughout the year.

BOCS monthly meetings will be held at the Library the first Monday of each month at 6:30pm.

Old Timbers Lake - “The Perfect Fishing Hole for Our Grandkids”

By Ken Knouf



This was the motto adopted by JPG employees back in 1970 when work began on the ambitious volunteer project of constructing Old Timbers Dam and impounding the 165 acre lake. And what a fishing hole it has been for 40 years! The 3½ year project, spearheaded by the Old Timbers Conservation Association (the military equivalent of BOCS), created what is recognized as one of the best warm water fishing lakes in southern Indiana. Today it represents the most popular recreation facility at Big Oaks.

A stone marker up at Old Timbers Dam credits the members of OTCA for building the lake. An estimated 5,025 after-work and weekend volunteer hours went into clearing the dam site and adding fill to make the many layers of the dam. That's not counting the “lunch brigade” members who enthusiastically transported sandwiches, fried chicken, and drinks up to the workers.

Although the bulk of the work was completed by volunteers, the “Paul Harvey rest of the story” is that an awful lot of official government time was also expended as equipment operators, welders, and mechanics honed their skills in making this project a reality. Still it is an achievement that in today's bureaucratic society would never have been doable—much less in the unbelievably short time it took.

Like people, lakes have a lifespan, and Old Timbers Lake is in middle age. But it has aged very gracefully, due primarily to the L Road causeway that has kept much of the sedimentation from reaching the main lake basin. Back when the basin was first impounded, soundings indicated a maximum depth of 40 feet in the Little Otter Creek channel. Back a few years ago when BOCS member Dale Carson took soundings in preparation of his Old Timbers Lake map, he recorded maximum depths of 32 feet. The lake area north of L Road consequently is very shallow but offers optimum habitat for many wading bird species such as herons and egrets.

Most don't realize that there has been an ongoing relationship between the Army and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for 40 years. At the time the lake was filling in the early 70's, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was known as the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, and Bureau Fisheries Biologists James S. Harrison and Hannibal Bolton were responsible for stocking Old Timbers Lake. They first removed all of the rough fish and diseased fish. Then, at the end of 1973 and early 1974, stocked the lake with 132,000 fingerling largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish, bluegill, red-ear sunfish, and walleye. Interestingly this was the only walleye release, but an occasional walleye was still caught until the late 1990's. During the years the Army managed the lake, USFWS biologist Chuck Surprenant, from Crab Orchard NWR, came over annually and stocked Old Timbers Lake with channel catfish fingerlings.

When Big Oaks Manager Joe Robb lowered the lake level three years ago for needed repairs, visitors were amazed to see the number of snags still standing throughout the lake basin and coves. This is one of the reasons the lake is such a good fishing lake—perfect fishery habitat—and another reason why gas motors are prohibited. Ironically, as the lake was being built, it was recommended that the snags be removed to prevent deadwood from washing up against the dam. Most anglers are happy the snags were left.

JPG Heritage Partnership Offers New Book

BOCS' members, especially those with connections to Ripley County, may want to purchase a copy of “Ripley County in WWII,” assorted newspaper clipping articles dealing with Jefferson Proving Ground and Ripley County's involvement in WWII. The JPGHP took original clippings donated by Evelyn Comer, from Holton, and organized them into a very interesting chronology of events that transpired from 1941 until 1944. The book sells for \$12.00 and is available from the Historic Hoosier Hills office in Versailles or the Army office in Building 125.

Park Ranger's Corner

By Beth Black

In late summer 2008, as part of an effort to beautify the refuge office and to assist in interpretation, a native plant and wildflower garden was established by refuge staff and volunteers. The garden, like the refuge has been ever-changing. Many folks have had a hand in the project at one point or another. First leg of the project involved clearing the sod on the rectangular piece of ground near the refuge parking lot. This task was accomplished by the women from the Department of Corrections, who assisted in several refuge maintenance projects at that time. Next, Janet Pike, Brian Winters and I took a road trip to Shooting Star Nursery near Georgetown, Kentucky. Armed with advice from Joe Robb and a list of plants to obtain at the nursery, we were on our way. The staff at the nursery was very helpful, and before we knew it we had a nice assortment of plants for the garden. We purchased a wide array of seasonal bloomers such as asters, milkweed, mist flower and Indian physic.

Once the plants arrived at the office, summer intern crew leader, Casey Mefford and summer interns Kyle Daly and Melissa Ernst, went to work placing the weed barrier and planting. Mulch application came next. The planting scheme may look a little haphazard, but that is exactly what we are going for. The idea is to have the garden look something like a small scale version of Big Oaks grassland. After the plants went into the ground, Dan Matiatos, Ashley Buchanan and Joe Robb were exceedingly diligent in seeing that the plants were well watered. Fanatical watering, I believe, was the key ingredient for helping the plants get established. As the garden became established, it was decided that it needed a split rail cedar fence. Brian, Joe, Melissa and Kyle called upon their carpentry skills and put together a fine looking fence. By early fall 2008, the plants were looking great. Plant markers were the next phase of the project. Traditional style markers were used, but with a twist. Instead of the traditional grease pencil, a weather resistant label maker was employed. So far, this has worked out quite nicely. No sun fade and no peeling.

During the heat of summer, the plants have hosted monarch caterpillars, milkweed tussock moths, butterflies of all sizes, and Dan even reported a small snake using the garden. In the fall when the plants begin to go dormant, we leave them as they are. The seed heads provide birds and other small mammals a winter food source. The plants provide an interesting winter landscape and during times of snow cover, we've even seen tracks where birds have taken cover beneath the snow and plants. The following spring, 2009 we were all anxious to see which plants had survived. With much anticipation we watched for the green shoots to begin to poke through the mulch. The prairie smoke was one of the first to emerge. After a long winter, those first wildflowers of the spring always seem the sweetest. As 2009 progressed we watched the blazing stars and asters glow along with many other colorful plants and grasses. Now, the garden is established and it has taken on a life of its own.

Most recently, we added a bird feeder and sign to the garden. Kelly Misamore gave us great advice when choosing an appropriate feeder for the garden. Bob Bayne and Brenda Lewis, Experienced Works staff at the refuge (seen in photo), installed the new feeder this March and now we eagerly await our first feathered friends. Bob also constructed a rustic sign frame to complement the split rail fence. As you can see, many people have had a hand in the garden project. It seems that the garden keeps evolving just as the refuge itself keeps evolving, with familiar faces moving on to new adventures and new faces arriving to put their own touch on the garden.



BOCS Winter Speaker Series A Success

By Jim Leveille



BOCS has completed its third season of hosting guest speakers at its monthly winter meetings. This year, our speakers included Pam Zehren, who spoke of her mother's experiences teaching at the Oakdale School (located on BONWR just north of the firing line). In January, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew J. Sweeney, commander of Jefferson Range (seen in photo), impressed the audience with a presentation on the Air National Guard's critical mission at the range and its effect on BONWR. February's speaker was BONWR's wildlife biologist, Perry Williams, who gave a talk on his pioneering work with spotted owls in the Pacific Northwest. In March, the Indiana Division of Wildlife Biologist, Steven Backs, traced the pattern of decline in Indiana's ruffed grouse populations.

His well-researched and passionate advocacy for science-based habitat management was a real eye-opener for many in the audience. April's speaker, Susan Knowles of the Muscatatuck Wildlife Refuge, spoke in great detail about the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and state assistance provided to private landowners who wish to enhance conservation practices on their property. According to Kristi Harms, library director at Madison's Jefferson County Public Library, the BOCS speaker series is among the library's most highly attended events. BOCS would like to thank Dr. Joe Robb for his assistance in suggesting, recommending, and contacting most of our wildlife experts. So, if you're feeling shut in next winter, come into the library on the first Monday of the month. BOCS meetings start at 6:30PM, and we are already setting up another intriguing set of guest lecturers for next year.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Would you like to become a Big Oaks Volunteer? Opportunities are plentiful to assist refuge staff in their management of the sprawling 50,000-acre refuge. There are a variety of positions available.

Those who enjoy fieldwork and the outdoors are needed to lead wildlife and educational tours at the refuge. Individuals or community-minded groups are also needed for bi-annual litter pick-ups along the refuge roadsides. Both of these tasks permit volunteers the opportunity to access Big Oaks at no cost and to see areas of the refuge not commonly viewed by typical visitors. If indoor tasks are more your cup of tea, then consider the refuge's need for speakers who can visit schools and civic groups to speak about Big Oaks. Those interested in becoming ambassadors for Big Oaks would receive instruction and training in the history and on-going projects associated with the refuge. For individuals who don't care to wander Big Oaks vast spaces, or are intimidated at the prospect of speaking to strangers, then the friendly U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff could always use help in their office. This could involve checking in visitors, answering phones, or aiding in the refuge's safety-briefing program. The opportunity to become involved is open to all.

VISITOR INFORMATION

All visitors must annually view a safety video and sign an acknowledgment of danger form. This will give you access to the areas designated for public use. There is a daily access fee, or users may purchase an annual pass. The day use area covers 4,170 acres. An additional 22,500 acres is open to the public for special hunts and guided tours. The public may access the refuge from mid-April to the end of November every Monday and Friday, and the second and fourth Saturdays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

BIG OAKS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Mission Statement: *To support the goals of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Big Oaks NWR; develop environmental education programs; enhance public awareness; encourage use and appreciation for the natural and cultural assets unique to Big Oaks.*

If you would like to join, or rejoin, the **Big Oaks Conservation Society**, to support the refuge, please fill out this membership form and send along with your check to:

**Check here for
Renewal**

**Check here for
New Member**

Yearly Membership Form (Oct. 2009 to Sept. 2010) Please select a category.

___ Youth \$5

___ Individual \$15

___ Family \$25

___ Supporting \$25

___ Lifetime (per Individual) \$150

___ Corporate \$500

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

E-mail _____

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge
1661 West Jpg Niblo Road
Madison, IN 47250

Phone: 812-273-0783

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E-mail: bigoaks@fws.gov

Website: www.fws.gov/midwest/bigoaks

REFUGE STAFF

Dr. Joe Robb - Refuge Manager

Ashley Buchanan - Wildlife Refuge Specialist

Mardean Roach - Administrative Support Asst.

Perry Williams - Wildlife Biologist

Brian Winters - Fire Management Officer

David Jones - Lead Range Technician

Casey Mefford - Range Technician

Beth Black - Park Ranger

Lisa Jones - Park Ranger

Laura Lake - Park Ranger

Rusty Pike - Maintenance Mechanic

Paul Killian - Seasonal Firefighter

Hillary Williams - Seasonal Firefighter

Andrew Hoffman - Intern

Rachel Kappler - Intern

Tess Piening - Intern

Big Oaks Conservation Society Newsletter

Spring 2010
Volume 8 Issue 1

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**Big Oaks National
Wildlife Refuge**

Newsletter Editor
Lisa Jones

Special Thanks to:
Joe Robb and
Big Oaks Staff



Big Oaks Conservation Society Membership Benefits



10% discount on merchandise



Opportunities to participate in special refuge events



Contribute to the improvement of the refuge for all visitors



Big Oaks Newsletter

 **Big Oaks Conservation Society**

P.O. Box 935
Madison, IN 47250



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**BIG OAKS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

January	River Otters Slide In The Snow
February	Great Horned Owls Nest
March	Prescribed Burning
April	Migrating Birds, Wildflowers, Fishing Begins! 17th Youth Turkey Hunt Workshop 18th Youth Hunt
May	15th Old Timbers Lodge Cleanup!
June	5th Outdoor Women at Big Oaks 19th Take a Kid Fishing Day
July	17th Butterfly Survey
August	14th Squirrel Season Starts
September	Migration Begins!
October	Deer Archery Season, Winterize Lodge
November	Youth Deer Hunt, Deer Shotgun Season
December	Christmas Bird Count



**Big Oaks
Conservation Society
P.O. Box 935
Madison, IN 47250**

Board Members

Jim Leveille - President
Gary Stegner - Vice President
Dianna Swinney - Secretary &
Business Manager
Jean Herron - Treasurer
Bill Hughes - Board Member
Bob Hudson - Board Member
Ed Schaefer - Board Member
Joe Robb - Executive Secretary

www.bigoaks.org