



# Mississippi River Project



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

## News from Around the Project

### THE “OFF SEASON” OF A PARK RANGER

Ask any park ranger the question, “what do you do in the off season” and the answer will be, “what off-season!” During the recreation months, typically April through October, we are very busy with visitor assistance, conducting tours and interpretive programs, park and service contract management and keeping up with the day-to-day operations of the parks. As our recreation season comes to a close in October, the “off season” of a park ranger begins.

As the last campers leave our parks, we are busy right away closing campgrounds and winterizing them to protect against damage from cold winter temperatures. By this time, preparations are being made for annual eagle watch events which we present in January. Fall maintenance projects, property inventories, and end of year reports are a high priority at this time as well. Preparations begin on our annual Along the River publication, which is a guide to recreation for the Mississippi River Project.

At the Mississippi River Visitor Center on the Rock Island Arsenal, historic Clock Tower Building tours and historic Arsenal Island tours are conducted through October and November. Clock Tower/Eagle Watch tours start in January and run through February. The rangers at the Visitor Center are also involved in conducting eagle counts during the winter months to help track the number of eagles present along the river. Many school and other interpretive programs are scheduled during the winter months as well.

As the snow begins to fly, we are busy working on next year’s service contract bids for services in our parks such as grass mowing, cleaning and fee collection. During November, the park ranger staff meets for an annual fall conference, at which time we report on the concluded recreation season and start the planning process for the next recreation season.

Late December and early January mark the beginning of our boundary line inspections along portions of the river. Park rangers walk our boundary line to make sure they are marked with orange boundary posts. They also look for unauthorized activity that might be happening on public lands such as building of structures, storage of personal property and damage to public lands. Other tasks started in January include planning and scheduling the interpretive programming in our campgrounds, lining up volunteers to help in our parks and holding our eagle watches.



As we head into February, we attend annual forestry meetings to discuss upcoming forestry projects, review past projects and take a look at future forestry program needs. The service contracts for the next recreation season are filled and pre-work meetings are held with all service contractors who will be performing services in our parks. Park rangers meet in February to complete yearly training and discuss plans for the upcoming recreation season. Staffed by park rangers, the Corps of Engineers has a booth at the RV, Camping and Travel Show and the Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Show held at the Quad Cities Conservation Alliance (QCCA) Expo Center in Rock Island, IL.



When March rolls around, the focus is on checking our parks for safety and maintenance work that needs to be completed to ensure our parks will be safe and open on time. Park rangers are busy in March and April putting on Illinois Safe Boating classes. Another common occurrence during these months is keeping a close eye on the river and its flooding potential due to snowmelt and rainwater. The Mississippi River Project and its staff work together to ensure our parks, facilities and equipment are flood proof and safe. The safety of our visitors and facilities are our number one priority.

As you can see, the winter months for a park ranger are where the behind the scenes preparation work is done. To a park ranger, the "off season" means the next recreation season is just around the corner.

## **RECREATION AREA SERVICE CONTRACTS FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR BID IN 2012**

The Mississippi River Project currently does not have any service contract opportunities available for bid however below you will find a listing of the contracts that will be available in 2012. If you would like to be put on a contact list for future consideration, or if you need more information on the service contract process on the Mississippi River, please contact Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist John Knoble at 309-794-4523 ([email](#)), or Administrative Officer Danet Dexter at 309-794-4524 ([email](#)).

<u>RECREATION AREA</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>CONTRACT TYPES</u>
Clark's Ferry	Montpelier, IA	Fee Collection
Lock and Dam #16	Muscatine, IA	Caretaker
Ferry Landing	Oakville, IA	Caretaker
Fisherman's Corner North	Hampton, IL	Fee Collection
Fisherman's Corner South	Hampton, IL	Custodial
Thomson Causeway	Thomson, IL	Custodial
Shady Creek	Muscatine, IA	Fee Collection
Shady Creek	Muscatine, IA	Custodial
Fenway Landing	Canton, MO	Caretaker

## Dubuque Ranger Station News

### A TRUE LOVE OF THE RIVER AND ITS BEAUTY

All along the river, there are people who live, work and recreate in and around the US Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project. Some of these people have taken a real interest in the beauty of the river and strive to share that with others while enjoying it in some new and adventurous ways. In this month's newsletter we would like to share with you some of the things that these river loving people have shared with us.



David C. Adams pictured on the left has lived near our Blanding Landing Campground for last 28 years. He was employed as a housing director for a college of hearing impaired students and which allowed him to have his summers off. He is a long time camper with the Corps on the Mississippi River, way back to when camping was free at our parks. Blanding Landing was always his favorite place to camp. Although he does not camp at our parks much anymore because he lives within walking distance, he remembers are parks as clean, mowed, and with no graffiti. He also remembers the caretakers and Rangers as being friendly and helpful.

Over the course of those 28 years of living along the river, he got big into canoeing and kayaking the Mississippi in pool 12. In April of 2010 he took on a new venture and became a stand up paddle boarder. It is very popular along the coasts and involves an oversized surfboard with a very big paddle. If the wind makes waves then he is able to surf them with a 4 ft "windpaddle" along with a sail that attaches to his stand up paddle board.

While out on the water he enjoys taking great wildlife photos and his pictures have won many prizes in local contests. David was recently interviewed for a book soon to be released titled "The Art of StandUp Paddling, a Complete Guide to StandUp Paddling on Lakes, Rivers, and Oceans" by Ben Marcus. David will be in the river section of the book along with one of his great otter photos taken out on the river just south of Blanding Landing Campground.



During the winter months, David cross country ski's on the river's edge, but never too far from the river bank. Whether he is mountain biking, cross country skiing, canoeing, kayaking, or standup paddling, David has always has a deep appreciation for the recreational opportunities in and along the Mississippi River.

Another person who has a true interest in the river and loves to write about it in his poetry is our volunteer campground host at the Pleasant Creek Recreation area located near Bellevue, IA. Here is a poem that he shared with our Dubuque Rangers and they would like now to share with you.

## **RIVER WRANGLERS**

**By: Bruce T. Brush - Pleasant Creek volunteer host**

The wild stallion flexes his muscles and snorts his defiance.  
His hooves pound the earthen floor of the corral.  
But even the mighty stallion has a master

The wrangler twirls his braided lariat and snares the horse.  
At first the horse resists but he is calmed by the wrangler.  
Soon he is beguiled by the wrangler and knows his master.

The mighty river is like a wild horse, to be tamed and used.  
The river wrangler is the US Army Corps of Engineers.  
They crafted the locks and dams to tame the wild river.

The river becomes a highway for convoys of barges.  
The shores become sites for building towns and industries.  
Levees are constructed to protect the homes and farms.

Recreation and wildlife areas are kept to make a better life.  
This draws the campers, nature lovers and legion of sportsman.  
The waters teem with life, putting food on the table for many.

Behind the scenes the Corps, like the Wizard of Oz, controls the flow.  
Pushing buttons and pulling mighty levers to set the gates.  
Thus the powerful river is held in submission to do useful work.

Each day a corps of unsung river wranglers take the pulse of the river.  
They measure the flow, the level and the temperature along the way.  
Science and engineering are the tools that make the river behave.



## **DUBUQUE EAGLE WATCH SCHEDULED**

### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 21**

- Outdoor viewing at Lock and Dam 11 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Live Eagle & Bird of Prey Programs by the University of Minnesota Raptor Center at 9:30 AM, 12:15 PM & 3:00 PM
- Bobcat and Lynx presentations by the Pella Wildlife Company at 11:00 AM and 1:45 PM.
- Indoor Exhibits from 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM at the Grand River Center - Port of Dubuque
- Trolley rides from Grand River Center to the National Mississippi River Museum and the outdoor viewing area.
- For more information call: 563-556-4372 or 563-582-0881

## **Thomson Ranger Station News**

### **2011 A YEAR IN REVIEW**

On October 23 the Thomson Park Rangers put an end to the official 2011 camping season. The past seven months have presented many highs and lows for recreation along the Mississippi River. We recorded the sixth highest flood on record for pool 13 of the Mississippi River and experienced windstorms that caused significant damage to trees. We had a safe camping season with few incidents throughout all our recreation areas. Although the Thomson Causeway remained closed most of the season, in September we were able to open the campground and accommodate campers for two months of tremendous weather.

All the work that needs to be completed can seem like a never ending process but with a great staff and dedicated volunteers we were able to keep moving forward. Our maintenance crew was able to install a new dock at Cattail Slough Recreation Area, south of Fulton, IL. With the Dock and new CXT vault toilet at the area the Thomson Ranger staff heard nothing but great reviews for the park, and most importantly, an increase in visitation at the boat ramp. The construction at Thomson Causeway Recreation is nearing completion. We now have three updated shower facilities, a three lane dump station and a walk up dump station to better accommodate visitors.

### **CLINTON EAGLE WATCH SCHEDULED**

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 7**

- Outdoor viewing at Lock & Dam #13 in Fulton, IL, 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
- Live Bird and Nature Programs: Clinton Community College from 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM
- Exhibits: Clinton Community College from 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM
- Free bus service from college to the outdoor viewing area.
- For more information call: 815-259-3628.

## **Mississippi River Project Office News**

### **MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**

#### **Bryan Schroeder – Maintenance Worker**

My name is Bryan Schroeder and I work on the maintenance crew for the Mississippi River Project. I came to the Corps of Engineers three years ago after learning from a friend who had recently retired from the Arsenal about the USAJOBS website for federal employment. Prior to working for the Corps I attended Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, IA where I acquired my associate degree in Ag Business and Farm Management. I grew up on a farm in Clarence, IA with three brothers and still am involved in the family farm today. After graduating I took on a variety of jobs including driving truck and doing construction. I was also involved in the military and spent four years in the navy working in aviation ordinance. I was stationed with the VS-22 squadron at NAS Cecil Field in Jacksonville, FL. While with the navy I had a chance to travel all over the world and did a six month deployment on the USS Eisenhower and another six month deployment on the USS Roosevelt.



Today I am still involved in the military with the 132<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing Iowa Air National Guard in Des Moines, IA where I help to maintain equipment and load weaponry. In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my family; my wife Cheryl and I have two children, Ashley and Dylan. I enjoy activities such as running races with my son like the Quad City Times Bix 7 and visiting my daughter who is attending Central College, in Pella, IA.

## **Mississippi River Visitor Center News**

### **HISTORIC CLOCK TOWER TOUR – NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces that the Visitor Center at Locks and Dam #15 is inviting guests to come participate in a Historic Clock Tower Tour. Relive the early days of the Rock Island Arsenal as you climb your way up the historic corridor of the Clock Tower Building which has been a Quad City landmark for over 100 years! Waiting at the top is a spectacular view of the Mississippi River. Visitors are invited to join this tour on Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 – 3:30 PM. The tours last approximately 1½ hours and will be guided by a Visitor Center Park Ranger. The tour will begin at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, located on the western end of Arsenal Island at Locks and Dam #15. This program is free of charge and everyone is invited to attend. Advanced registration is recommended. An adult must accompany children under 12 years of age. For more information, or to sign up for the program, please contact the Visitor Center at 309-794-5338.

### **NATURE SERIES - RIVER MIGRATION – NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces that the Visitor Center at Locks and Dam #15 invites guests to a program on river migration. During this program guests will learn about the many species of birds that use the Mississippi Flyway as a route to find food and shelter each year. This program will be held on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. The program will be approximately 1 hour long and be presented by a Visitor Center Park Ranger. The program will be held at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, located on the western end of Arsenal Island at Locks and Dam #15. This program is free of charge and everyone is invited to attend. Advanced registration is recommended. For more information, or to sign up for the program, please contact the Visitor Center at 309-794-5338.

### **EAGLES, OUR WINTER GUESTS – DECEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup> & 18<sup>TH</sup>**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces that the Visitor Center at Locks and Dam #15 invites guests to a program on the American Bald Eagle. During this program guests will learn about our national symbol and see how these beautiful birds use the Mississippi River Locks and Dam system to find food throughout the winter. This program will be held on Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> and again on Sunday December 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am. The program will be approximately 1 hour long and be presented by a Visitor Center Park Ranger. The program will be held at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, located on the western end of Arsenal Island at Locks and Dam #15. This program is free of charge and everyone is invited to attend. Advanced registration is recommended. For more information, or to sign up for the program, please contact the Visitor Center at 309-794-5338.



## MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

### Lindy Tarkington – Park Ranger Student Career Employment Program (SCEP)

I started my education after graduating from Geneseo High School in 2006 at Black Hawk College where I earned an Associate of Science degree. I then started at the Western Illinois University Quad City Campus in January 2010. I began my journey with the Corps of Engineers in April 2011. I was in a class at Western Illinois University with Park Ranger Mike McKean in a previous semester and he let me know about the SCEP position at the Visitor Center. I am now in my last semester at Western Illinois University earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Law



Enforcement and Justice Administration with a minor in Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration. When I am not working, studying, or babysitting I enjoy spending time with my family and boyfriend. I am the youngest of five so there is always something going on. We like to be in the outdoors swimming, boating, hunting, fishing or just doing yard work. My favorite hobby is fishing. I like fishing for Bass the most but it is fun to catch anything. Lately, I have been helping out at my boyfriend Justin's farm in Polo, Illinois. It has been quite the experience learning how to combine and work with cattle. I now have a greater appreciation for farmers.

I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to work for the Corps and hope to find a permanent position after graduating in December. I have loved every part of this experience from working with the public at the VC to getting my hands dirty in the field. It has been great working with all of the employees in the project and getting to see different jobs and aspects of the project. I hope to work for the Corps of Engineers for years to come.

## QUAD CITIES BALD EAGLE DAYS

### FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 6-8

QCCA Expo Center, 2621 4th Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois

Hours: 4:00p.m. - 8:00p.m. Friday, 10:00a.m.-8:00p.m. Saturday, 10:00a.m.-5:00p.m. Sunday

- Live Eagle & Bird of Prey Programs by The World Bird Sanctuary
- Pella Wildlife Company Live Wolf Show and Niabi Zoo's Live Animal Show
- For more information contact Rob Junker 309-788-2543

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER VISITOR CENTER

### JANUARY 14 - FEBRUARY 12, WEEKENDS ONLY

- Combination eagle watch and historical clock tower tours
- Saturday and Sunday 9:30 – 11:00 AM and 12:30 – 2:00 PM
- Reservations recommended. Group size is limited. Call 309-794-5338

## **Muscatine Ranger Station News**

### **MUSCATINE BALD EAGLE WATCH**

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

- Outdoor viewing from 9:00 to 3:00 at Pearl City Station in Riverside Park
- Live Eagle programs at 9:30 & 11:00, Pearl City Station
- Environmental Exhibits inside the Pearl City Station
- For more information call: 563-263-7913

## **Quincy Ranger Station News**

### **JR. RANGER PROGRAMS OFFERED**

Ranger Brent Groesch is scheduled to visit Adams Elementary School again this year to present the Jr. Ranger program to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. Last year was Brent's first opportunity to present these Jr. Ranger programs and he is looking forward to teaching classes again this year about the wonders of nature. Field trips are rare in the state of Illinois with struggling economic times. It is nice to still be able to expose kids to the outdoors and give them an appreciation for things they might otherwise not be given a chance to learn about. If you are interested in scheduling a Jr. Ranger program with the Quincy Ranger Office please call 217-228-0890 for more information.

### **KEOKUK BALD EAGLE DAYS**

#### **SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 21-22**

- Indoor programs and Environmental Fair at the River City Mall, Keokuk, Iowa  
(Possible location change may be needed call to confirm)
- Live Eagle Programs Saturday 9:00-3:00 and Sunday 10:00-3:00
- Outdoor viewing along the River Front
- For more information call: 1-800-383-1219 or 217-228-0890

### **QUINCY BALD EAGLE WATCH**

#### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

- Outdoor viewing at Lock and Dam 21 from 9:00 - 4:00
- For more information call 217-228-0890

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**Thank you,**

**Park Ranger Staff**

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