



Photo by Steve Vacek, Mississippi River Project

Ryan Walden, eagle expert, conducts the indoor program at the Clinton Watch.

## “Just What Do Rangers Do During The Winter?”

By Steve Vacek, Mississippi River Project

The public often asks how park rangers keep themselves busy during the winter season. Sure, the rangers aren't in the public eye as much during this season as they are the other three seasons, but there are many “behind the scenes” activities that take place. There are contracts that need to be reviewed and updated, maintenance chores to take care of, brochures to be inventoried and ordered, and of course the never-ending onslaught of paperwork to read, complete and file.

One of the rangers responsibilities that the winter season doesn't put a chilling halt upon is in the challenges of conducting interpretive programs. The winter holds a wonderful opportunity for the staff to educate the public about the river's winter visitor, the bald eagle.

During the winter, numerous eagle programs and organized watches are conducted along the projects boundaries. This year, similar to other's, there were watches held in: *Dubuque, Clinton, Pleasant Valley and Keokuk, Iowa the Quad Cities, Lock and Dam #16 and*

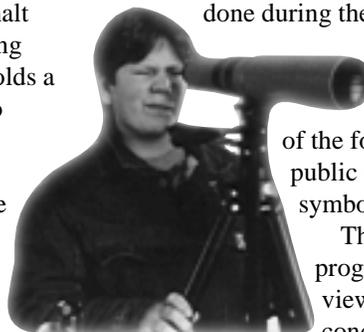
*Quincy, Ill.*

These watches were successful due to the partnerships that the rangers have made with many of the local communities, civic groups and organizations. Bret Streckwald, park ranger, Dubuque Field Station said, “The Dubuque Eagle Watch is successful because of the community support that is given to the watch. Many businesses assist with this event and partnership with the Corps.”

The staff at the Mississippi River Visitor Center is also kept busy conducting a unique winter program that is done during the weekends. These activities consist of a

Clock Tower Tour that concludes with an Eagle Watch. The Center staff allows participants to view eagles out of the fourth floor windows. As a result, the public gets a spectacular view of our national symbol.

These watches combine both indoor programs and presentations with outside viewing opportunities. Eagle experts conduct the indoor programs, while volunteers and rangers staff the outside viewing areas. At some of these watches a school day is set aside for



students to participate. These “school days” are usually conducted at the larger events.

Wendy Herald, park ranger, Mississippi River Visitor Center, coordinated the Corps activities at the Quad City Eagle Watch. She said, “This year’s show numbers were at an all-time high. Eagle viewers were impressed with the large number of eagles on the Rock River this year. The Kid’s Day was a success and wouldn’t have been possible without the help from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Wapsie Nature Center.”

These successful watches allow the Mississippi River Project Rangers to “delight the customer” in providing opportunities for the public to learn more about our wonderful winter visitors. What a great opportunity and privilege it is to provide this service. Jim Kelley, park ranger, Thomson Ranger Field Station, said the Eagle Watch in Clinton, Iowa was a success. “Our Annual Eagle Watch represents one day that we celebrate the bald eagle, our national symbol, which has recovered wonderfully from the brink of extinction, thanks to many concerned individuals, private organizations and governmental agencies who have worked

hard to protect the bald eagle,” he said.

But there’s more ... another important job that the staff accomplishes during the winter season is marketing. This is done by participating in camping, travel and outdoors shows. Again the project rangers “delight the customer” in answering questions, explaining the process of reserving a campsite and passing out brochures, handouts and various water safety materials. These shows allow the rangers to obtain an insight on what the public likes and dislikes and, as a result, the project obtains a “pulse” of what our customers want.

A ranger’s range of duties and responsibilities during the winter season are

filled with challenges and opportunities. It is a busy time for the staff even though the campgrounds and recreational facilities are closed. These watches and



Photo by Mark A. Kane, Public Affairs

Wendy Herald points out one of three eagles perched on a tree near the Rock Island Government Bridge to Groundhog Job Shadow Day students during their visit to the Mississippi River Visitor Center Feb. 2, 2000.

shows contribute to the Corps’ mission by providing the best customer care possible.



## Ms. Iowa Visits Rock Island District

Ms. Iowa 1999, Jennifer Nicole Caudle, highlighted the finale of the District’s celebration of Black History Month held at the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center Rock Island, March 1, 2000.

Caudle, who is a native of Davenport and an acclaimed cellist, spoke to a capacity crowd gathered at the Center’s gymnasium and finished her musical program to a standing ovation.

Robert Smith, administrator of Black Hawk College, also spoke at the event.

Caudle was crowned Miss Iowa in May 1999. She reached the Iowa pageant after being crowned Miss Scott County. Her goal as Miss Iowa

is to bring music to all of Iowa’s students. She is committed to Music Education Advocacy and is working with the National Association of Music Education and the Iowa Music Educators Association to bring music into the lives of all Iowa youth.

Caudle also founded the Providing Resources In Music education Aimed at Reaching Youth program. This program provides awareness about the importance of music education and supplies financial resources and instruments to students in need. Through this program, thousands of dollars have been raised for needy Iowa students.

