



Mississippi River Project



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

Looking Forward To Spring

Eagles, Eagles everywhere!!

February 26th was our last eagle count at the Mississippi River Locks and Dams for the season. What a season it was! There was a significant increase in the numbers of eagles all up and down the Mississippi River within the Rock Island District from Lock and Dam 11 in Dubuque, IA through Lock and Dam 22 in Hannibal, MO. MRPO staff does a weekly eagle count at the locks and dams, these counts are done on Wednesdays for 12 consecutive weeks. Over a 12 week period for this particular stretch of the river the weekly eagle count average was 1676 adults, 689 juveniles and 85 unknown eagles. With the high number of eagles counted this was a very popular area for eagle watching enthusiasts and photographers coming from all over our nation. The high number of eagles is also a good indicator for the overall health of the American Bald Eagle population along the Mississippi River.



OUTDOOR SHOW AND RV CAMPING SHOW



If you have a love for the outdoors and winter is keeping you from participating in your favorite recreational activities then maybe a visit with our ranger staff at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island, IL got you geared up for summer while the cold air is still blowing outside. The Outdoor Show was held February 13th through the 16th our rangers were on hand to provide information on all the recreational opportunities our project has to offer. We had annual day use passes available and navigation charts for sale so that boaters can get ready for the season by purchasing their boat ramp sticker early. The Outdoor Show saw 1,783 visitors at the Corps booth. The RV Camping Show was held the weekend of February 21st through the 23rd, rangers were on site to answer questions and provide information on all our camping and recreational areas. The RV Camping Show saw 1249 visitors at the Corps booth. The MRPO conducts

a drawing during both the Outdoor Show and the RV Camping shows for a free weekend of camping in one of our campgrounds. The winners of the drawings this year are: Josh DeCastecker, and Hudson Harris, congratulations to Josh and Hudson! For more information on these shows and other upcoming events/programs, check out this website www.qccaexpoctr.com

FAMILIAR FACES WILL BE MISSING THIS YEAR.....

The old saying that “the only constant is change” will again be proven correct as the Mississippi River Project Natural Resource Management Section says “see you later” to a couple of quality people who will be taking off for at least the time being from helping us manage our recreation areas, lands, and waters.

Park Ranger **Brian Blakeway** from our Dubuque Ranger Office and formerly of the Visitor Center at Locks and Dam #15 is leaving federal service effective on February 22, 2014. Brian and his family are re-locating to Dallas, Texas after spending several years as a student intern and park ranger for our project. Brian is a very personable, smart and professional man who wore the park ranger uniform with pride. He was great at expanding partnerships and working with the youth of the Dubuque Area on several educational projects and special events. His talent and sense of humor will be missed. We wish him and his family nothing but the best in their new endeavors! (Brian is the *being* on the ground in the photo!).



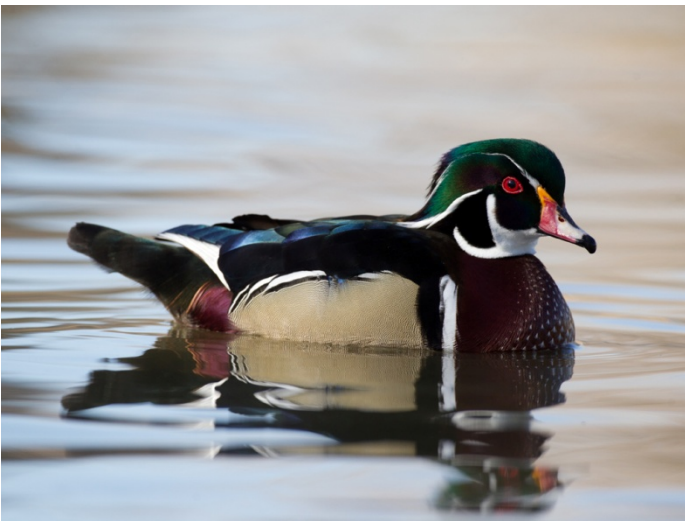
Summer Park Ranger **Gregg Dolan** is taking the year off from being a teacher, coach, father, husband, and a park ranger at our Thomson Ranger Office (he is only taking off the park ranger part!) and adding “general construction contractor” to his many talents as he and his family build a new home in Morrison, Illinois. With 25 years of experience as a summer park ranger on the Mississippi River, Gregg has seen about everything there is to see – some of it I am certain he would like to forget! Gregg too is a dedicated professional who never shied away from work in his life, has a great sense of humor (once you actually get him to speak), and wears the COE uniform with pride. He has not officially

“retired”.....he will see how this year goes and we may see him back in a ranger uniform again – you never know? Good luck on the house Gregg, and enjoy your summer as a civilian!

Thomson Ranger Station News

Thomson Causeway Wood Duck Nesting Box Cleanout

Boy Scouts of America Troop 642 will continue collecting data on wood duck nesting at the Thomson Causeway Recreation Area. Each spring Troop 642 inventories over 25 nesting boxes set up throughout the area. They clean the box and determine if it was used as a nesting box or if it was inhabited by a competitor. Signs that wood ducks had nested include: egg shells, membranes, feathers and occasionally dead hatchlings. Unfortunately it is not uncommon to find the nest has been used by competitors like squirrels, raccoons and other birds. The annual cleanings are important in order to keep the ducks coming back to the same nesting boxes.



Waterfowl USA, Mississippi Flyway Chapter has partnered in this effort to promote Wood Duck habitat conservation. The Mississippi Flyway Chapter has donated 25 wood duck nesting boxes for Troop 642 over the past several years. Through this donation, wood duck activity has increased in the Thomson Causeway and has led to an increased number of successful hatches.

If you would like more information regarding the wood duck nesting program at the Thomson Causeway Recreation Area contact the Thomson Ranger Office at (815)259-3628.

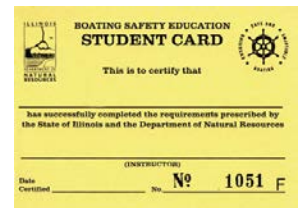
Campground Volunteer Opportunity

The Thomson Ranger Office is accepting volunteer applications for the upcoming recreation season. Volunteers are a valued resource for the Corps of Engineers who serve in a wide range of capacities. Duties include basic maintenance, landscaping, assisting visitors, and handing out information on the area. Groups are also encouraged to volunteer for special projects or clean-ups may be arranged. All long term volunteers must have a self contained camping unit in good condition and will be parked on the designated volunteer site. Electric and water is provided along with an onsite dump station. If you are interested in volunteering contact the Thomson Ranger Office for more information (815)25-3628.

Mississippi River Visitor Center News



FREE Boating Safety Classes



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces that they will be offering **free** boating safety education classes. This class is recommended for people who are new to boating on the Mississippi, families that enjoy weekend boating adventures, or seasoned boaters who would just like to brush up on their safe boating knowledge. Anyone over the age of 12 can be certified. Those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. This is a classroom based safety course and will not include on-the-water experience. Upon successful completion of the class and exam, participants will be issued an Illinois DNR Boat Safety certification which is honored in both Iowa and Illinois.

Upcoming 2014 Classes available for registration:

**Mississippi River Project Office – Locks and Dam #14, Pleasant Valley, Iowa -
Must register in advance.**

All classes run from 8:00-5:00 on March 15th, March 29th, April 12th, April 26th, & May 17th

You will need to call: 309-794-5338 to sign up for one of the classes.

The American White Pelican



The Mississippi River Visitor Center Staff spotted the first of the returning American White Pelican's during their eagle count conducted on 26 Feb. This is a sure sign that spring is just around the corner. With spring on the way and warmer weather approaching it will soon be time to observe these magnificent birds along with many more varieties that will be returning to and migrating through our area.

Muscatine Ranger Station News

Volunteer Needed at Corps of Engineers Park

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi River Project is looking for a fulltime Volunteer Campground Host at Blanchard Island Recreation Area. The Volunteer Campground Host position runs from May 15, 2014 through October 15, 2014. The campground host is responsible for the daily tasks of greeting park visitors, informing campers of self-registration procedures, cleaning the restrooms daily, cleaning out fire rings weekly, and informing the park rangers of maintenance needs. Volunteers will not collect or handle money. Hosts will provide 40 hours of volunteer service per week and may serve for the entire recreation season or for any portion of the season. The volunteer selected for this position is provided a campsite with water and electric. A dump station is located in the park for use by the volunteer. Blanchard Island Recreation Area is located along the Illinois side of the Mississippi River just south of Muscatine, Iowa. If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions, please contact the Mississippi River Project's Muscatine Park Rangers by calling (563) 263-7913 or by emailing mvrodmn16@usace.army.mil.

Quincy Ranger Station News

Quincy park ranger Brent Groesch just completed a series of 6 Jr. Ranger Programs for 4 third grade classrooms at Madison Elementary. Brent said the class was extremely popular among both the students and teachers and likes to provide it every year. The topics Children learn about in the Jr. Ranger program are Forestry, Wildlife, Environmental Protection, Water Safety and Corps Ranger Duties. If teachers are interested in signing up for these Jr. Ranger classes you may contact the Quincy ranger office at: **217-228-0890**



Quincy Ranger Station will also be conducting IL DNR Boating Safety Classes

Upcoming 2014 Boater Safety Classes available for registration will be conducted at the Adams County Farm Bureau - Quincy, IL – Call: 217-936-2712 or 217-228-0890 to register for classes.

All classes run from 8:00-5:00 on May 17th, June 14th, & July 12th

Natural Resource Management News

Environmental Stewardship Management

During the 2013-2014 winter months, the Forestry Team has been and continues to be active in implementing several timber stand improvements along the federal land ownership of the Mississippi River. One section of Mississippi River that is an area of focus is the shores of Iowa in Pool 16. Down-river of Muscatine, IA, there are several sites that were once part of an agricultural lease program that had expired independently of each other from 1986 to 1994. As these agricultural leased sites were removed from farming, the areas were converted into tree plantings to improve and increase wildlife habitat. After 20 to 28 years of



growth, these forested sites have performed well in establishing young stands of timber. Trees that were planted included: species of oak hickory, walnut, sycamore, green ash, pine and willow. Other tree species naturally seeded themselves into the tree plantings. These tree species included: silver maple, cottonwood, box elder, mulberry and American elm. In areas where the planted trees have been successful, the forestry team, park ranger staff, and recreational maintenance crew of the Mississippi River Project have been implementing a crop tree release thinning. Trees that are developing well are selected as crop trees. Trees impeding on continual healthy growth of the crop trees are cut down. Most of the crop trees are nut bearing trees which tend to grow slower than non nut bearing trees; so trees being cut down are typically 10' to 30' taller than the selected crop trees. The canopy gap created around the crop tree provides additional room to develop stronger and/or larger spreading crowns which is the desired result. By improving the upper branching structure, the trees crown, at this young age of tree development will increase the amount of nut dispersal and wildlife habitat potential in the long term. A crop tree release is one of the many timber stand improvements being conducted in Rock Island District on the Mississippi River Project to increase the quality of wildlife habitat and usage. This active management will continue to ensure as much habitat as possible can remain sustainable for many years into the future.

If you would like to be removed from our e-mail list please print "unsubscribe" in the subject line in a reply to us.

**Thank you,
Park Ranger Staff**

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