



# Success Stories

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## Midewin Begins Restoration of Prairie Woodland

Decades of agricultural and military use are the heritage of the lands now comprising the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in northeastern Illinois. But prior to the first farmers arriving to settle in the wilderness, these lands were part of the vast tallgrass prairie that extended from Canada to Texas, and from Nebraska to the Great Lakes.

The image of the prairie as an endless sea of grass has been described in many historic travelers' journals. Today, ecologists recognize that the prairie ecosystem is actually a complex mosaic of relationships among soils, hydrology, animals, and plants, and consists of more than open grasslands. Savannas are grasslands with scattered trees, woodlands have a denser canopy of trees, and wetlands include marshes, wet meadows, seeps, and springs. All are part of the prairie. Historically, Prairie Creek Woods at Midewin NTP was a mix of woodland, savanna, and prairie. Livestock grazing and fire suppression have changed the savanna and woodland vegetation, but large open-grown oak and hickory trees are evidence of these former communities.

Invasive woody shrubs and trees, both native and nonnative, have overrun the tract, suppressing oak regeneration and native wildflowers. These woody invaders have also taken over some seeps along a small tributary of Prairie Creek, shading out native sedges and wetland wildflowers, and partially drying up the seeps.

Only five percent of Midewin would have historically been savanna or woodlands, and Prairie Creek Woods is one of only three sites of this type here. Restoration will require opening up the woods, controlling invasive woody and herbaceous plants, and allowing ground water recovery.



**A hydro-ax removes and mulches weedy trees and brush at Prairie Creek Woods.**

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Trees that have invaded the oak hickory woods and savanna, such as Osage-orange, honey-locust, green ash, hawthorn, and wild cherry, will be cut down or, if over six inches in diameter, girdled. Non-native invasive shrubs such as bush honeysuckle and autumn olive will be cut down. Cut surfaces of the woody vegetation and the leaves of herbaceous invasives such as garlic mustard will be carefully treated with herbicide to prevent re-sprouting.

Restoration work began this winter on the first 30 acres of the 180-acre tract. The project is partially funded through a restoration grant from the Army Corps of Engineers and CorLands, an affiliate of Chicago-based Openlands Project. Tree cutting is occurring while the ground is frozen and heavy equipment can operate with minimal soil disturbance. Monitoring wells and weather stations have been installed to assess the impacts of removing the woody vegetation on the hydrology of the area.

This year's work area will be the experimental or treatment plot, and will be compared to a 15-acre control plot to be treated next year. The data collected should confirm that removing some of the woody vegetation improves the hydrology of the site.

Future plans for Prairie Creek Woods include prescribed burning, further woody vegetation control, continued control of invasive herbaceous species, and planting of desirable native herbaceous and woody plants. The character of Prairie Creek Woods will change over time as restoration proceeds.

Opening up the savanna and woodlands will allow regeneration of the oak trees which will provide more acorns to support wildlife such as wild turkeys, squirrels, and blue jays. The native herbaceous understory will return, and the hydrology will start to recover to a more natural state.



## Undeveloped Island Saved Thru Land Exchange



*The land exchange on the Superior NF means that Bear Island (above) will remain in its present state, free from any further development.*

A unique land exchange transferred ownership of more than 70 acres on the Superior National Forest from the USDA Forest Service to the Ojibway Summer Home Group (OSHG).

The 72.33 acres—known as the Ojibway Lake Recreation Residence Tract, and home to 16 recreation-permit holders and their properties—was ceded to the OSGH in return for Bear Island, an undeveloped, 119.55-acre island on Bear Island Lake near Ely, Minn., that was owned by the Group.

The transaction resulted in a net gain of 47.22 acres for the Superior NF, along with 3,000 feet of undeveloped shoreline on Bear Island that the Forest Service vows will remain in its present state.

The Superior's Ojibway Lake property was valued at \$856,000, while the OSHG Bear Island parcel is worth \$980,000. As exchanges are based on equal value rather than equal acreage, the United States made a cash equalization payment of \$124,000 to the Group at the time of closing.

The Ojibway Lake Recreation Residence Tract was established in the 1940's, one of many similar recreation residence tracts built on National Forest lands across the nation during that time. Initially, there was no direct road access to the Ojibway tract. Many of the lots were developed by floating logs and supplies across Ojibway Lake, and hauling the materials up the steep hills to the cabin sites. The permit holders own the cabins and outbuildings located on the sites, which are now accessible by a low-maintenance gravel road.

There is no commercial electrical or phone service to the tract.

During the public scoping and the Environmental Analysis (EA) process—including a series of meetings with the Lake County Board, Land Commissioner and Zoning Division, the public, conservation groups, adjacent land owners and SHG members—it became evident there was growing concern that the Group would make significant improvements to the property after the exchange was completed, which could affect the character of Ojibway Lake.

Although the EA did not indicate the need for any formal restrictions, the Group wanted to assure the public, county and other interested persons that the land conveyed to them would be managed and protected in much the same manner as when it was under Forest Service ownership.

As a result, the Ojibway SHG developed a "Declaration of Covenants, Restrictions, and Easements for Ojibway West," in which the Group pledged to protect the land and preserve its current and natural condition. This Declaration will be recorded with the exchange deed. In addition, critical protection covenants and development restrictions, along with the designation of "undeveloped common lands," will be included as requirements on the subdivision plat. Any subsequent modifications to the recorded plat will require public hearings and County Board approval.

Public benefits—in addition to the increase in public acres and shoreline—include the protection of Bear Island, a large and unique island, from development and the savings realized by the elimination of a complex special use permit.

This land exchange is a win/win situation for everyone involved, including the public who now have access to Bear Island and its nearly 120 acres of undeveloped natural beauty.





## Record Northern Pike Hooked on Allegheny

Carl Stoltz of Bradford, PA, hauled in a 48-inch, 35-pound northern pike on Jan. 1 while ice fishing with his father and brother on the Allegheny National Forest's Allegheny Reservoir. The pike, which had a girth of 21-1/2 inches, qualified as a new state record.

While many people were sitting inside watching television on a bad weather day, the Stoltz "boys" were fending off freezing rain in shallow waters near Red Bridge. After auguring 15 holes through eight-inch ice in four feet of water, only two feet from shore, they started to catch a few fish before 9 a.m. Three hours later, a tip-up rigged with an eight-inch shiner on a treble hook and chartreuse twister tail began spinning crazily. Stoltz grabbed the line.

It didn't take him long to know he had a large fish on the other end and he called to his father to grab a gaffe. His first thought was that a musky was on the other end. After 20 minutes, the fish had lost his fight and the father and son managed to squeeze it through the small ice hole onto the frozen surface. That, in itself, was nearly as difficult as reeling it in. It was at that moment they knew they had a trophy northern pike catch.

After a photo, the fishing party took the huge pike to more than one place to be weighed, making certain the scales were certified to record the fish's weight accurately and as prescribed by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the state's certifying body. The previous record—33 pounds, eight ounces—had stood for nearly 23 years. Gerald Enderle of Tioga, PA, landed it in 1980 in the same body of water.



*Carl Stoltz holds his Northern Pike on Jan. 1, which set a new state record.*

## Allegheny Wins Regional Award for Indiana Bat Study

The Allegheny National Forest was recently honored for a comprehensive bat study, receiving a 2002 Eastern Region Partnership Recognition Award. Several partners worked to make the project a success. Forest Supervisor Kevin Elliott accepted the Outstanding Accomplishments Achieved through Innovative Partnerships award at a regional honors award ceremony held in Milwaukee in December 2002.



Partners who assisted the Allegheny NF in funding the four-year bat study included the Pennsylvania State University; Bat Conservation International, Inc., a Texas-based organization which supports public education, research and conservation of threatened and endangered bats; the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation; and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Other contributors included the Pennsylvania Game Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Northern Allegheny Conservation Association, a Warren County conservation support group; and the Eastern National Forest Interpretive Association.

Highlights included bat surveys on 123 sites, using mist nets and anabat detectors; a habitat analysis on 16 sites utilized by the Indiana bat; a study of past management activities which influenced this bat's foraging over areas with past and on-going timber management; and determining what management activities could be implemented to increase the types of habitats that benefit bats, in particular the Indiana bat. Eight different bat species were detected and two Indiana bats were caught and studied before release.

The summary concluded that the Indiana bats appear to be localized in distribution and habitat, appear to have a low level of presence as compared with other bats; appear to forage in a wide variety of forest types and canopy closures; and the Allegheny NF's present direction provides conditions conducive to a diversity of bats.



## Artists Recreate 18th Century Life on Hiawatha NF



*While living at the Hiawatha's rustic McKeever Cabin, Clyde Mikkola shared stories of life as a 1760's itinerant limner with visiting schoolchildren.*

The jury is in, and the verdict is unanimous: Having recently completed its first year, the Hiawatha Artist-in-Residence program is a qualified success.

Hiawatha AIR is designed to connect communities and artists through the Hiawatha National Forest. Funded in part by a grant from the Alger Regional Community Foundation, the program consists of an Artist Residency and Community Interaction program.

Professional working artists in various disciplines, media, and styles stay in remote Hiawatha NF facilities—such as cabins, camps, and cottages—for up to two weeks. Some of the facilities are very primitive, offering solitude and reflection; others are more modern structures in rural settings.

“Our first-year Residents worked in two primary media, photography and painting, but the lodging, programs and approaches they chose were wonderfully varied,” said Hiawatha AIR coordinator Janel Crooks.

Crooks oversees the AIR program in addition to her role as recreation planner on the Munising Ranger District.

The first Hiawatha AIR 2002 Resident David Curl—a former adjunct professor of Art at Kalamazoo College and professor emeritus at Western Michigan University—focused on creating new images of the Forest’s autumn color, including images of Grand Island National Recreation Area.

The second Hiawatha AIR 2002 Resident, Michael Kucinich—a nature and landscape photographer—captured the subtle fall beauty of the Forest, especially Bruno’s Run Trail and surrounding areas. Clyde Mikkola—a Copper Country artist with thirty years of art experience and ten years as a living history participant—is the third Hiawatha AIR 2002 Resident. For his residency, Mikkola combined these two interests by living for two weeks in the Forest’s rustic McKeever Cabin, using clothing and gear authentic to an 18th century limner, or artist.

So Hiawatha AIR provides a time of “retreat” on the National Forest for the Artists. But that’s only the first step.

Digital photographer Dave Curl hosted two photography workshops. One class was for youth and one for adults. The workshops were held on Grand Island, as well as a local high school photography class.

“The free youth workshop was a true success in large part because of the students’ and Dave’s enthusiasm,” said Crooks.

A week later, participants of the adult workshop gathered again, this time to share the photos they had taken the previous week, generating a lively discussion of the new techniques they had learned.

“I was impressed by the talent of the group,” commented Crooks. “Even the less experienced photographers took some outstanding photos. Everyone was learning together, beginners and seasoned photographers alike.”

Mikkola chose a different approach. Mikkola’s November residency combined three passions: art, history and hunting. The Calumet-area artist elected to spend his residency living as a 1760s traveling limner at the Forest’s remote and rustic McKeever Cabin. Mikkola molded his community involvement activities to suit this unique approach: Members of two Alger County 4-H clubs and a Mather Middle School 8th grade outdoor education class stepped back in time, visiting Mikkola at the remote McKeever Cabin. Since access to the cabin is non-motorized, walking away from civilization was a built-in part of the experience.

“We are really excited to have these excellent artists focusing their energy on the Hiawatha,” said Munising District Ranger Teresa Chase. “And most importantly, giving something back to the community.”

Crooks is hopeful that other Forests will adopt Artist-in-Residence programs.

“I looked at the incredible number of National Park Service Artist-in-Residence programs and figured we needed something similar,” she said. “What a great way to reach out to the public and local communities.”



## Wayne Employee Finds Owner of Lost Ring

No one remembers how long the class ring had been in the lost-and-found drawer at the Wayne National Forest. Becky Stewart, Information Receptionist on the Wayne, said it was there when she started work and she had always been intrigued with whose it might be.

“No one on the district knew who had found it or where, but I knew it had a story and an owner who would want it,” Stewart explained.

There must be a bit of an amateur sleuth in Stewart, because the more she thought about the mystery, the more she decided she wanted to find the owner. Unsure of the appropriateness of doing research on the job, she made all the calls from her home on her own time or used her calling card.

The only clues she had were that the man’s class ring was gold and blue, said “1964 La Grange Senior High Gators” and the initials W.L.W. engraved inside the band.

Stewart used the internet first and found two La Grange High Schools, one in Lake Charles, Georgia, and one in Marrero, Louisiana. She made calls and found her first real lead when a Diane Lantz at the Louisiana School found a boy in the 1964 graduating class with the initials W.L.W. – Walter Leroy Watts.

“Nineteen sixty-four was almost 40 years ago, and neither the school secretary or I held much hope for his parent’s phone number in the school records to still be good, but it was!” Stewart said. She spoke to the dad, who said the two had lived in the same house for the past 50 years and never changed their phone number.

“The elder Mr. Watts was very excited,” reported Stewart. “He had this wonderful southern drawl and couldn’t believe I’d called all the way from Ohio to track down his son.”

He promised to have his son call Stewart back.

“Which he did,” Stewart continued. “And Walter Watts didn’t even know his ring was missing. He hadn’t seen it in years, but said he had never been to southeastern Ohio or the Wayne National Forest.” However, Stewart said, in reflection, Mr. Watts admitted he’d gotten divorced four years previously and his former stepson may have lost the ring on a trip to Ohio. Stewart said she’s confident the ring belonged to Walter Watts, and has packaged it up and returned it to him. He now lives and works in Sulphur, La.

She said Walter Watts wanted to send her something for her efforts in tracking him down, but “I told him it wasn’t necessary. But if I’m ever in Louisiana, he’s going to let me know where the good fishing holes are.”



*The mystery ring has now been returned to its owner in Louisiana.*

## Hoosier Rec Planner Helps Kick off Lewis & Clark Event



*Myers at the Lewis & Clark tent.*

Nancy Myers, Recreation Planner on the Hoosier National Forest, spent part of her recent vacation working at the kick-off for the Lewis and Clark Jefferson's West Exposition. Myers has been involved in planning for the bicentennial as it comes through Indiana, the second of the national signature events.

“It was a real good experience,” Myers said. “I took lots of pictures and the FS folks from the Washington Office, and Region 1, 2, and 4 were very hospitable to me, as were those from BLM and the National Park Service.” She said the Lewis and Clark signature event in Clarksville, Indiana, is scheduled for October 2003.

Myers said quite a number of people came by the FS booth from all over, and was impressed with the level of interest by the public. She sat in on a presentation by Tom Thompson, Deputy Chief of the FS, who gave a presentation on Forest Service

accomplishments.

The staff, she noted, was happy to have her there. “And I,” Myers asserted, “was happy to be a part of it all!”



## Hiawatha Honors Volunteers During Ceremony



*Hiawatha Interpretive Association board members Joanna Mitchell, Mary Snitgen, Jean Kinnear, and Lynn Emerick pose with Hiawatha NF rec planner Janel Crooks.*

On January 15, 24 volunteers and their guests attended a reception at Valley Spur Day Lodge hosted by the Hiawatha National Forest's Munising Ranger District staff. During the evening presentation, Forest Service staff recognized more than 80 volunteers who made valuable contributions to the management of the Munising Ranger District.

"All of us who work at the District recognize the importance of community involvement in the successful management of the National Forest," said Munising District Ranger Teresa Chase. "Volunteers do critical work and help us connect with the communities that lie within the Forest."

Individuals and groups in nine different categories were recognized, including Developed Recreation; Wilderness and Non-motorized Trails; Ski Trails; Education and Interpretation; Grand Island National Recreation Area; Adopt-a-Road/Forest; Fisheries; Botany; and East Channel Lighthouse.

Assistant District Ranger Dick Anderson presented awards in the Developed Recreation category to Larry LeVeque, representing the Alger SnoRiders, and the Au Train Boat Launch group, represented by Bob Bartol. Anderson also presented awards in the Wilderness and Non-motorized Trails

category to Ben Travis and Harry Lindquist of the North Country Trail, and to Karin Perry, a representative of the Northcoast Riding Club.

Forester Dave Worel presented awards to Friends of Valley Spur volunteers Larry Truel, Jonathan Gennick, Carl Hansen, Norma Harger, Wayne and Laura Johnson, Alma Oatley, Deb Olger, Karen Prunick, Charlie Simons, Cathy Sowa, Vicki Sowa, Mary Vaisanen, and Linda Wappner.

Recreation Planner Janel Crooks presented awards in the Interpretation and Education category to volunteer Dolores Leveque of the Grand Island Youth Archaeology Workshops; Hiawatha Interpretive Association (Lynn Emeric, Jean Kinnear, Lora Loope, Joanna Mitchell, Marty Pokela, Mary Snitgen, and Mark Sanderson); and Hiawatha Artist in Residence Program, represented by David Curl, Mike Kucinich, and Clyde Mikkola.

Assistant Ranger Anderson also recognized the Grand Island Association, which was represented by Cliff Erickson. Timber Sale Administrator Kevin Pine presented awards to Adopt-a-Road/Forest Program participants. Those honored included Dave Nelson, Ray Carlson, Nora Deatsman, Rod DesJardins (Pathways), Henry Feldhusen, Jude Holloway, Tome Hyde, Ed Lasich, Harry Lindquist, Terry McLaren, and Rene Nelson.

Fisheries Biologist Mark Ammerman presented awards to volunteers involved in two fisheries projects. Those recognized for carrying out the Pete's Lake Fishing Pier Project included Chuck Riley Construction; Munising Lions Club members Dent Vaughn, Duck Snyder, Don Paajanen, Ken Graber, and Chuck Nicklas; community members Doug Scheuneman, Kevin Kolbus, Charles Nebel, Charlie Nebel, Buck Hulse, and Tim Tiernan; Dave Cromell and the Alger County Sheriff's Department's Community Service program; and AlTran.

Randy Lagow, Jim Ely and Waldo Ely were honored for their assistance with Fisheries Surveys.

Ecologist Deb LeBlanc presented recognition to Jan Jeffcot and Judy Ruttan, two Native Gardens volunteers. National Public Lands Day native plant seed collection volunteers included Sharai Delong, Andi Hales, Laura and Sara Koscielniak, Marilyn Lindbeg, Elinor and Milton Taylor, and Janet and Kyle Ekstrum.

District Ranger Teresa Chase recognized the East Channel Lighthouse Team comprised of Mary Jo Cook, Chris Case, Art Krellwitz, Anne Rzanca, Norma Harger, and Marty Pokela. The East Channel Lighthouse team also received similar recognition in December at the Forest Service's Eastern Region Honor Awards ceremony in Milwaukee.

"We're excited to have such strong community involvement and hope the enthusiasm continues to grow," said Recreation Planner Janel Crooks, one of the event organizers. "In the coming year, we want to expand volunteerism on the Hiawatha, especially in the Adopt-a-Road/Forest Program."



## Wayne Employees Conduct Trial Bird Count

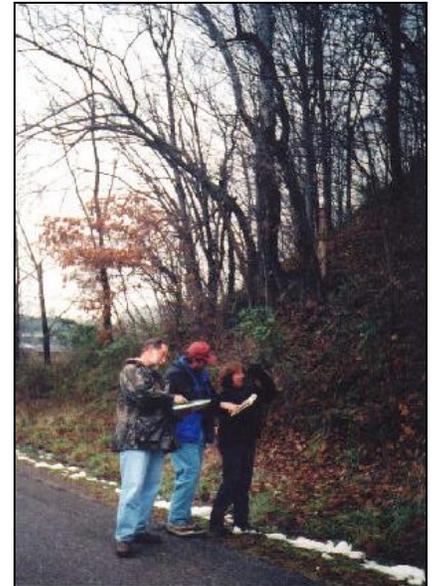
Wayne employees, along with their friends and families, volunteered their time to participate in two trial runs of the Forest's fledgling Christmas bird count program. While steaming cups of hot chocolate and coffee were primary in everybody's thoughts towards the end of the cold and damp day, all involved were pleasantly surprised at the number and variety of the birds they saw.

The Wayne's biologists have been looking for an activity that would raise the public's awareness of the National Forest and the NatureWatch opportunities it provides. Bird watching is a very popular activity that people of any age can enjoy, and bird counts are known to spawn a bit of fun competition and camaraderie among the participants. Welcoming bird watchers to the Forest is just one way to introduce people to the hidden treasures of the Wayne—including its employees.

Before opening such an event to the public, the logistics had to be tested. The methods of the long-established Audubon Christmas Bird Count were adopted. One trial count was held on each the Athens and Ironton Units between December 14 and January 5. The employees were divided into groups with their friends and families and asked to drive and hike the routes set out by the biologists—by doing this any logistical “bugs” could be identified and fixed for future events. The trial was considered a success. The Wayne's first official Christmas bird count will be held in December 2003, and the public will be invited to participate.

According to the Audubon Society, more than 50,000 observers take part in this all-day census of early winter bird populations each year. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across America. Audubon's first Christmas Bird Count began in 1900.

And how did the Wayne birders do? Nineteen people volunteered their time to test the logistics and count birds. A total of 954 birds, representing 42 species were observed during the two trial counts. Many of the common winter woodland birds were seen, such as the white-breasted nuthatch, northern cardinal, bluejay, golden-crowned kinglet, and red-bellied woodpecker. Some of the participants were lucky enough to see birds like the bald eagle, rough-legged hawk, and eastern screech owl.



*Wayne employees took part in a trial bird count in December and January.*



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