

ANNUAL REPORT

2016



Thank you for your generous support in 2016!

GENERAL SUPPORT

Arlington Inn
The Lakeside Association
Ohio Ornithological Society
Milan Garden Club
Maumee Bay Lodge
Friends of the Gorman Nature Center
Thrivent Members of Grace Lutheran
James Eidemiller
Bill Ash
Marcus Clarke
Lee Anne Briese
Bill & Jo Fedor
Terry & Brenda Weidner
Lawrence & Christine Griggs
Ken Holcomb
Julie Frazier
Bruce & Martha Bridgeman
Nancy Dunlap
Ann Shreffler
Peter & Corrina Lungulow
Judy Empcke
Earl W. Campbell Jr, MD
David Williams
David Macy
Dave & Joni Finley
Dallas Vonglahn
Steve Pero
Natalie Bredbeck
Ken Sherburn
Jill & John Tingley
Robert Young
Cyndi Czyzewski
Bryan Henige
Bridget Dolin
Gregory Sage
Melanie Bowen-Greenwald
Patricia & Joseph Zellia
Mary Jane Zeis
Harvey Galloway
David Kreienkamp
Constance Faddis
Dr. John Wall
N. Pries
Diane Valen
Sally Burger
William Nesper
Bill & Jenni Biegala
Wally & Emmy Pausch
Vincent Capozziello
Tom Furry
William & Patricia Seles
Stephanie Bevan
Shirley & James Haar
Sara J. Sherick
Ronald Overmyer
Romaine M. Stawowy
Rodger & Sigrid Emerling
Pete Schwager
Patricia Whitesides
Marcia Hornstein
Lisa Brohl
Letha Ferguson
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Kim & David Myles
Kelly Riehle
Kathryn Smith

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Jeanette M Throne
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Jack & Cathy Burris
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Harold & Dottie Douglass
Hallie LeBlanc
Denise Iams
Charles & Joan Tague
Brenda Shelton
Bill & Dorothy Baker
Barbara Kahler
Ann Gombash
Ann & Marty Gulbransen
Alan and Carol Norris
Aimee Arent
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Rick & Rosie Sabo
Kathleen Kapustar
David Newman
Wanda Apgar
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Tom & Paula Bartlett
Linda Skrzyniecki
Carrie Price
William Switala, PHD
Edward Harper
Sandy Rodgers
Nancy Scott
Chris Redfern
Ruth Samuels
Greg Hornstein
Rick & Lynn Fuchs
Merry Z Mac Rae
Kathy Nicholson & Susanne Hanno
Sally Lownsbery
Carol & Dave Rowland
Beth Cagan
Timon Tesar
Margaret Kern
Gwen Wee
Stephen Rueter
Edward Patrick
James Traxler
T. Birmingham

GRANTS

Toledo Community Foundation
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

KIDS TRANSPORTATION FUND

Vincent Capozziello
Shannon Pearson
Ryan Lesniewicz
Kim & Kenn Kaufman
Candy Zelinski
Susan N. Johnson
Mackenzie Warren
Ronald Overmyer
Jenni Biegala
Justin & Becky Woldt

IN HONOR & IN MEMORY

Jean Martin, to honor Joyce Martin
Jim & Carrol Spitnale, to honor Al & Betty Schlecht
To Honor Cheryl Whipple:
Elden Apling
Brenda Gates
Justin Bays, in memory of Norman Body
In Memory of Chad Null:
Katie Turley
NAMSA HR
The Wolfe Family
The Null Family
The Shepherd Family
The York Family

SPECIAL EVENTS

Mon Ami Restaurant
Simply Elegant
Gregory Hart, DDS
Brad Smith Roofing
Geo. Gradel Co.
Warnike Carpet & Tile
Fairway & Sunshine Dev.
Hartung Title
Bolte Real Estate
Treasure Cove Marina
Red Fern Inn
Arlington Inn
Our Guest Inn
WCPR Radio
The Listening Room
Croghan Colonial Bank
Black Swamp Bird Obs.
The Traveling Chef
Coffee Emergency
Port Clinton Rotary Club
Spangler Motor Sales
Cruisin' Zeake
Eddy Pausch
Bench's Greenhouse
Hallie LeBlanc Studio
Anonymous
Michelle Mays
Harold Roe
Dana Bollin
Barb Wismar
Justin & Becky Woldt
Marcus Clarke
Barb Weigel
Michele Ross
Dee Cochran
Dave Sherman
Tom Bartlett
Gib Young
Kenn Kaufman
Dave Lewis
Lisa Brohl



FRIENDS OF
OTTAWA
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

TRUMPETER CLUB

Ag Credit
Arlington Inn
Barnside Creamery
Oak Harbor Pet Haven
Our Guest Inn
Tri-Coast Title
Cathy Allen
Judy Ann Buehler
Vincent Capozziello
Patrick J. Czarny
Bill & Dorothy Baker
Len Partin
The Red Fern Inn

SNOWY OWL CLUB

Croghan Colonial Bank
Geo. Gradel Co.
Gregory Hart, DDS
Treasure Cove Marina
Warnike Carpet & Tile
Justin Bays

EAGLE CLUB

Hartung Title
Brad Smith Roofing
Fairway & Sunshine
Darlene Sillick
Anonymous Donor

OSPREY CLUB

Joan Kimple Family
Bolte Real Estate
Anonymous Donor

Letter from the President



Friends,

This is our very first formal written annual report for the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (FONWR). We are very proud of the progress that we have made as an organization.

The Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge had a very successful year in 2016. We accomplished a major milestone in our second year of transitioning from an all-volunteer organization to a volunteer organization with paid management staff. Being conservative, we projected that it would take three years to generate a positive cash flow needed to support the organization with a paid staff. We are happy to inform you that we exceeded our projection. We were able to generate a positive cash flow in two years as you will note in the financial report.



The Friends organization is guided by its mission and its vision as determined by the board.

Mission - Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge increases awareness and capacity of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex by engaging others and advocating for conservation initiatives.

Vision - To exemplify a strong and sustainable friends group supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System with a focus on the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

There are five groups of people who are responsible for the success of the organization. They are:

- ◆ *FONWR Members* – Members are the base of the Friends organization. It is through members that we get much of the financial support and volunteer assistance that we need to make our organization a success.
- ◆ *FONWR Donors* – We sincerely appreciate the many individuals and businesses who support our refuge through monetary and in-kind donations to our Friends group.
- ◆ *Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Staff* – We work with a great Fish & Wildlife staff to make the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge a sanctuary for wildlife and a wonderful natural visitation experience for people.
- ◆ *A tremendously talented and committed FONWR board* - We added several new board members this year who brought new skills, abilities and enthusiasm to the board.
- ◆ *Very talented and committed FONWR employees* – We have two great employees. They are the Association Manager, Aimee Arent and our Nature Store Manager, Catherine Traxler.

You will read later in the report about our success in 2016 as well as our plans for 2017. We look forward to a very exciting and successful year!

We ask for your support in accomplishing FONWR's mission and vision. You can help by becoming a member, by volunteering your skills and talents, and through your financial support of the organization's programs and projects. Please contact us for more information on how you can help.

Ronald L. Overmyer
FONWR President

Friends of Ottawa NWR **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Ronald Overmyer, *President*
Nancy Dunlap, *Vice President*
Letha Ferguson, *Secretary*
Jenni Biegala, *Treasurer*
Pete Schwager
Jacob Worthington
Len Partin
Bill Baker
Sara Sherick
Ginger Haar
Melanie Bowen-Greenwald
Kathy Booher
Shaun Strong

Justin Woldt, *USFWS Liaison*

Financials



Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Profit & Loss January through December 2016

| | Jan - Dec 16 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Ordinary Income/Expense | |
| Income | |
| 4000 · Nature Store | |
| 4000.01 · Merchandise Sales | 78,422.81 |
| Total 4000 · Nature Store | 78,422.81 |
| 4005 · Memberships | |
| 4005.01 · Student | 190.00 |
| 4005.02 · Senior | 4,457.50 |
| 4005.03 · Individual | 1,852.50 |
| 4005.04 · Family | 4,996.00 |
| 4005.05 · Best Friend | 3,455.00 |
| 4005.06 · Trumpeter | 1,300.00 |
| 4005.08 · Eagle Club | 3,000.00 |
| 4005.09 · Osprey Club | 2,500.00 |
| Total 4005 · Memberships | 21,751.00 |
| 4010 · Fundraising | |
| 4010.01 · On-Site FONWR Fundraisers | 1,644.00 |
| 4010.02 · Off-Site FONWR Fundraisers | 11,225.00 |
| Total 4010 · Fundraising | 12,869.00 |
| 4015 · Donations | |
| 4015.01 · Unrestricted | 44,041.57 |
| 4015.02 · Restricted | 24,190.72 |
| Total 4015 · Donations | 68,232.29 |
| 4020 · Interest Income | 69.55 |
| 4025 · Grants | 500.00 |
| 4030 · Investment Income | |
| 4030.1 · Dividends, Interest, & CGS | 2,009.77 |
| 4030.2 · Unrealized Gain/Loss | -3,909.77 |
| Total 4030 · Investment Income | -1,900.00 |
| Total Income | 179,944.65 |
| Cost of Goods Sold | |
| 5000 · Nature Store Expenses | |
| 5000.01 · Merchandise Purchases | 40,758.99 |
| 5000.02 · Shipping & Mailing | 1,535.21 |
| 5000.03 · Merchant Service Fees | 2,189.95 |
| Total 5000 · Nature Store Expenses | 44,484.15 |
| Total COGS | 44,484.15 |
| Gross Profit | 135,460.50 |
| Expense | |
| 8003 · GoFundMe Fee | 29.25 |
| 6000 · Bank Service Charges | 297.09 |
| 6005 · Board Expenses | 1,092.72 |
| 6010 · Board Memberships | 1,090.00 |
| 6020 · Employee Travel | 628.35 |
| 6025 · Insurance | 2,194.50 |
| 6030 · Maintenance & Repair | 1,265.31 |
| 6035 · Marketing & Advertising | |
| 6035.02 · Printing and Reproduction | 5,614.66 |
| 6035.99 · Other Advertising | 1,899.22 |
| Total 6035 · Marketing & Advertising | 7,513.88 |
| 6040 · Membership Promotion | 1,575.72 |
| 6045 · Office Supplies | 1,817.32 |
| 6050 · Payroll Expenses | |
| 6050.01 · Salary/Wages | 43,120.00 |
| 6050.02 · Payroll Taxes | 2,971.44 |
| 6050.03 · Workers Comp-BWC | 257.81 |
| Total 6050 · Payroll Expenses | 46,349.25 |
| 6055 · Postage | 2,316.65 |
| 6060 · Training Expense | |
| 6060.02 · Staff Training | 61.69 |
| Total 6060 · Training Expense | 61.69 |
| 6065 · Professional Fees | |
| 6065.01 · Accounting | 1,731.21 |
| 6065.02 · Consulting | 1,593.75 |
| 6065.03 · Legal | -125.00 |
| Total 6065 · Professional Fees | 3,199.96 |
| 6070 · Software Updates | 5.95 |
| 6075 · Subscriptions & Dues | 2,828.50 |
| 6076 · Kids Transportation Expense | 374.22 |
| 6080 · Utilities | |
| 6080.01 · Internet | 1,016.16 |
| 6080.02 · Telephone | 588.92 |
| Total 6080 · Utilities | 1,605.08 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 6085 · Volunteer Support | 32.00 |
| 6090 · Refuge Support | 17,434.54 |
| 6095 · Photo Blind Expenses | 20,807.72 |
| 6200 · Fundraising Expenses | |
| 6200.03 · Cars for Critters Expenses | 2,392.00 |
| 6200.01 · Wine For Wildlife Expenses | 7,261.27 |
| 6200.02 · Sunset Cruise Fundraiser | 4,445.04 |
| Total 6200 · Fundraising Expenses | 14,098.31 |
| 6103 · Youth Waterfowl Hunt Expenses | 1,473.40 |
| 6105 · Intern Stipend | 3,150.00 |
| 8002 · PayPal Fee | 319.57 |
| Total Expense | 131,560.98 |
| Net Ordinary Income | 3,899.52 |
| Other Income/Expense | |
| Other Income | |
| 7000 · In-Kind Income | 0.00 |
| 7001 · Sales Tax Adjustment | 35.68 |
| Total Other Income | 35.68 |
| Other Expense | |
| 8001 · Misc. Expense | 1,527.70 |
| Total Other Expense | 1,527.70 |
| Net Other Income | -1,492.02 |
| Net Income | 2,407.50 |

Special thanks to Jason Conklin of J. Conklin Consulting for assisting us in the transition to Quickbooks software.

Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Balance Sheet As of December 31, 2016

| | Dec 31, 16 |
|---|------------|
| ASSETS | |
| Current Assets | |
| Checking/Savings | |
| 1000 · Operating (481) | |
| 1000.01 · Operating | 57,778.05 |
| 1000.03 · Lake Erie Waterfowlers Donation | 610.61 |
| 1000.04 · Kids Transportation Fund | 448.99 |
| 1000.05 · Refuge Support | -901.85 |
| 1000.06 · Photo Blind | -207.72 |
| Total 1000 · Operating (481) | 57,728.08 |
| 1010 · FWS (123) | 70,858.65 |
| 1015 · Short-Term Savings (750) | |
| 1015.01 · ONWRA General | 1,011.03 |
| Total 1015 · Short-Term Savings (750) | 1,011.03 |
| 1020 · Cash Drawer | 212.00 |
| 1025 · PayPal | 1,204.39 |
| Total Checking/Savings | 131,014.15 |
| Other Current Assets | |
| 1200 · Nature Store Inventory | 21,958.21 |
| 12000 · Undeposited Funds | 1,567.77 |
| Total Other Current Assets | 23,525.98 |
| Total Current Assets | 154,540.13 |
| Fixed Assets | |
| 1300 · Fixed Assets | |
| 1300.01 · Tent | 1,000.00 |
| 1300.02 · Office Equipment | 1,866.98 |
| Total 1300 · Fixed Assets | 2,866.98 |
| Total Fixed Assets | 2,866.98 |
| Other Assets | |
| 1035 · Investment Account | 106,100.00 |
| Total Other Assets | 106,100.00 |
| LIABILITIES & EQUITY | |
| Liabilities | |
| Current Liabilities | |
| Other Current Liabilities | |
| 2100 · Sales Tax Payable | 189.11 |
| 2400 · Payroll Liabilities | |
| 2400.01 · Federal W/H | -56.76 |
| 2400.02 · Social Security | 218.24 |
| 2400.03 · Medicare | 51.04 |
| 2400.04 · Ohio W/H | 199.02 |
| Total 2400 · Payroll Liabilities | 411.54 |
| Total Other Current Liabilities | 600.65 |
| Total Current Liabilities | 600.65 |
| Total Liabilities | 600.65 |
| Equity | |
| 3000 · Opening Balance Equity | 263,929.75 |
| 3200 · Retained Earnings | -3,430.79 |
| Net Income | 2,407.50 |
| Total Equity | 262,906.46 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY | 263,507.11 |

The Rookery Nature Store



At the beginning of 2016, Friends of Ottawa NWR invested in a new logo through an online contest to match our updated name. As part of the transition, The Rookery Nature Store ordered plenty of new merchandise. Some of our favorites include fleece jackets for both men and women, as well as logoed hoodies with our trail map on the back. Visitors can now purchase customized stickers and clings, mugs, binocular harnesses, and other merchandise that proudly displays their support for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.



In addition to apparel and educational materials, we have started selling artwork in a partnership with local businesses. Hand-made wooden ornaments, refuge photography, and metal works crafted in the county have been a hit so far with our visitors... Where else can you purchase a hand-crafted cattail frond?! We are proud to support our local craftsmen and are eager to see who we meet in 2017.



Did you know that Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was purchased with duck stamp dollars? Since 1934, more than 5.7 million acres have been acquired using funds from the duck stamp. Purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp and the Junior Duck Stamp in the Nature Store directly supports the National Wildlife Refuge System. We are proud to announce that we are also selling the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp, supporting wildlife and habitats locally. (State parks offer some major discounts for legacy stamp holders!)



We have to mention our most recent publication, *Images of Ottawa*. This 20 page paperback showcases Ottawa NWR through striking photography, and exhibits everything this refuge has to offer. From critters you might see to management techniques, it is in this book!

This year has been phenomenal for The Rookery Nature Store- because of the support we have received from both tourists and our local community.

Our gross merchandise sales were \$78,422.81 in 2016- all thanks to our wonderful members and visitors from every corner of the world. By purchasing items from The Rookery Nature Store, you are helping to support Ohio's only National Wildlife Refuge complex.

THANK YOU!

Store Manager, Catherine Traxler

Interested in helping us in The Rookery?
Give us a call at 419-707-7756!



Friends Accomplishments



- ◆ **Official Name Change:** The name “Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Association” was good to us, but we decided it was time to officially become Friends of Ottawa NWR this year. With that change came a brand new logo!
- ◆ **Internship Program:** To help refuge staff, Friends of Ottawa NWR set aside \$11,100 to support living stipends for five interns.
- ◆ **School Bus Subsidies:** Field trips are very important to our schools and the refuge, but getting here can sometimes be a little tricky. So, we provided more than \$1,200 to cover transportation costs to bring nearly 500 children to the refuge!
- ◆ **Communications:** Our 2,100 email contacts received 88 e-updates, including four newsletters in 2016.
- ◆ **Membership:** At the end of 2016, we had 571 members! Our Friends are enjoying the increased communications and opportunities like monthly speaker presentations and members only tours.
- ◆ **Grants:** We received a matching grant from the Toledo Community Foundation, and the Step Outside Grant from the Ohio Division of Natural Resources to support the Youth Waterfowl Hunt in October.



- ◆ **License Plate:** Ohio residents have seen the organizational license plates for different places and universities... Be on the lookout in 2017– we are working hard to have a plate available for ONWR!
- ◆ **Sponsorship:** Friends of Ottawa NWR sponsored and provided assistance with the Christmas Bird Count for Kids, Spring Migration, the Wildlife Stop & Shop, Lake Erie Wing Watch, the Annual Photography Contest, Cars for Critters, the Youth Waterfowl Hunt, Howl-o-ween, and the Holiday Open House.
- ◆ **The Rookery Nature Store:** In addition to reeling in \$33,000 net profit this year, the store provided inspiration to every person who visited.
- ◆ **Window on Wildlife:** Plans began in 2015 to construct an Amish-built Window on Wildlife just off of the boardwalk loop, situated in a lovely mix of marsh and shrub-scrub habitat. The Window is now complete with bird feeders, microphones, and photography opportunities to give visitors a secluded place to watch Ottawa NWR’s Wildlife. This addition was made possible by the Joan Kimple Family in memory of her great love for the outdoors.
- ◆ **Fundraising Events:** Our fundraising committee worked hard this year to pull off two big events. The inaugural Wine for Wildlife at Mon Ami Restaurant and Winery was held in June. The live music and gorgeous decorations provided a stunning atmosphere for the 130 people in attendance. Scrumptious hors-d’oeuvres, wine tasting, and a silent auction full of locally crafted items made the night a resounding success. In August, we hosted a cruise on the Jet Express around West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge. Research partners were on board to discuss the island rookery, and Gib Young as Teddy Roosevelt provided a bounty of historical and conservation connections. Between these two events, our fundraising committee raised almost \$13,000, not including sponsorships!



Volunteers & Interns



"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart." — Elizabeth Andrew

In 2016, **61 volunteers** donated their time, energy, and skills to preserve and promote Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, totaling **6,538 hours** of work. Volunteers supported us in a variety of ways, from helping in The Rookery Nature Store, greeting visitors at the front desk, and promoting the refuge at outreach or fundraising events, to sprucing up our pollinator garden and mowing the grass. There is truly a job for everyone!

Friends of Ottawa NWR is proud to have set aside **\$11,100 for living stipends to support 5 interns** - three dual purpose Visitor Services/Environmental Education Internships, two Environmental Education Internships, and one Hunt Internship. While these interns gained valuable experience with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our non-profit, refuge staff gained valuable time to devote to ongoing projects. Volunteer help is truly priceless.

We are grateful for those willing to put in the effort to maintain the gem that we have here in NW Ohio. We cannot thank you enough for helping in 2016!



Why I volunteer



Article By: Tom Furry

I started volunteering at ONWR about fifteen years ago. I was interviewed by Rebecca Lewis and accepted. I started out cutting grass and along the way, Rebecca asked me if I would like to take disabled people out on the walking trails in a golf cart. That sounded like fun and I accepted and I met a lot of nice people.

About thirteen years ago, my wife Carol and I started monitoring the eagle nests on the refuge. At that time there were only two but today there are six! There are three osprey nests on the refuge and these are monitored too. Today, I also work the Front Desk at the Visitors Center two days a week, and this past Summer I started monitoring water levels in the various pools on the refuge.

When I was a young boy my Grandfather took us fishing on Lake Erie via Crane Creek. We put the boat in at John's Bridge and went out to the lake to drift fish. In those days the creek was covered over by huge trees and it was like going into a tunnel, sometimes dark and mysterious... At least it was to a seven-year-old.

As to why I enjoy the refuge, the reasons are many. I'm sure memories of my youth have much to do with it. Today, I am trusted and privileged to have the run of the place and I am careful to not abuse that privilege. I have a store of memories that include my youth, the Eagle and Osprey watching, the various Hawks and Owls, the Geese, Ducks, Swans, Sandhill Cranes, River Otters, Beavers, Muskrats, Red Fox, Coyotes, Deer and even the Voles that invade the Visitors Center to get out of the cold. Everything is included!

I would be truly remiss if I did not mention the personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All are excellent people. Sometimes people will ask me about being a volunteer and I tell them it's a fun thing to do.

Your National Wildlife Refuge



The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex consists of three National Wildlife Refuges:

Ottawa NWR:

Located between Toledo and Port Clinton, this 6,858 acre refuge is managed for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrant songbirds, and a variety of plant and animal species.

Cedar Point NWR:

Cedar Point NWR's 2,450 acres comprise the largest contiguous marsh on Lake Erie. Aside from a designated fishing area, access is by permit only.

West Sister Island NWR:

This 80 acre island is situated in Lake Erie, about 9 miles from shore. It is the largest Great Blue Heron and Great Egret rookery in the U.S. Great Lakes. Access is by permit only.



The Blanding's Turtle is a state-threatened reptile found at Ottawa NWR.

In 2016:

- ◆ **212,033 people visited the Ottawa NWR Complex.**
- ◆ 193,897 watched wildlife in their natural habitats.
- ◆ 158,611 hiked the trails.
- ◆ 52,845 photographers tried for that perfect shot.
- ◆ 34,758 took a trip on the Wildlife Drive.
- ◆ 34,323 people explored the Visitor Center.
- ◆ 17,828 participated in one or more of 23 special events.
- ◆ 6,230 learned about nature during talks and programs.
- ◆ 928 people fished in designated areas.
- ◆ 898 visits were to participate in controlled hunts.
- ◆ 528 cyclists rode the trails.
- ◆ An undocumented number of visitors played *Pokémon GO*.
- ◆ 339 wetland acres were restored.
- ◆ 329 acres were treated for non-native, invasive plants.
- ◆ 107 monarch butterflies were tagged.
- ◆ 57 acres of land were enhanced for pollinators.
- ◆ 29 research studies were conducted.



RV Volunteer Michael Dale releases three tagged monarch butterflies as part of a citizen science initiative.



Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is one federally threatened species found at Ottawa NWR.

The Bigger Picture



Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is part of a much larger **National Wildlife Refuge System**. Known as one of America's greatest conservation success stories, the system has protected and restored habitats for hundreds of species including fish, plants, animals, and migratory birds.

The American bald eagle is one of the nation's greatest success stories, and a bird that thousands of visitors travel to see at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge every year. Brought back from the brink of extinction, our national symbol is now thriving in the wild.

Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge as the first wildlife refuge in 1903, the System has grown to **566 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts encompassing more than 850 million acres.**



Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is part of Region 3 of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Also known as the **Midwest Region**, Region 3 encompasses eight states and four out of five U.S. Great Lakes.

Comprised of more than 10,000 miles of coastline and 30,000 islands, the Great Lakes provide drinking water, transportation, power and recreational opportunities to the 30 million citizens who call the Great Lakes basin "home." As the largest group of fresh water lakes on Earth, the Great Lakes hold 95% of the United States' surface fresh water. An important economic resource, the Great Lakes also provide over 1.5 million jobs and \$62 billion in wages to American citizens.

The **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative** began in 2009 as conservation priority through a partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The GLRI Action Plan identifies five major focus areas to serve as a guide for collaborative restoration work. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has current projects in the following three focus areas:

- Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern**, including pollution prevention and cleanup of the most polluted areas in the Great Lakes.
- Invasive Species**, including efforts to institute a "zero tolerance policy" toward new invasions, including the establishment of self-sustaining populations of invasive species, such as Asian Carp.
- Habitat and Wildlife Protection and Restoration**, including bringing wetlands and other habitat back to life, and the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the entire 530,000 acres of Great Lakes coastal wetlands for the purpose of strategically targeting restoration and protection efforts in a science-based manner.



Another conservation priority determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is **Save the Monarch**. Monarchs are one of the most recognizable butterfly species in North America, but their population is in trouble due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change. You can help by planting milkweed and nectar plants that are native to your area. You can even become a citizen scientist and participate in tagging monarchs to track their migration to Mexico.

Advocacy



Advocacy is one of Friends of Ottawa NWR's five strategic goals. Over the next few months, we will be focusing our efforts on creating long-term plans to support federal advocacy issues. For now, we are supporting local issues as well as following the guidance of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only independent nonprofit exclusively focused on protecting and promoting the 850-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest network of lands and waters set aside for wildlife conservation. Founded in 1975, the Refuge Association's mission is to conserve America's wildlife for future generations through programs that protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.

The NWRA rallies together refuge friends groups and volunteers, birders, hunters, anglers, ranchers, students and other conservation nonprofits to create a collective voice for the Refuge System. They also cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help staff efficiently and effectively accomplish an ambitious conservation mission for the benefit of the American public protecting endangered species, biological diversity and all the wildlife who call the Refuge System home.

The Refuge Association had a record revenue year of nearly \$3.3 million in operations and helped turn that into nearly \$1 billion in public finance for fish and wildlife conservation. NWRA has worked on local, regional, and global scales in partnership with the FWS, national and local conservation organizations, and always with a "big tent" approach where sportsmen, ranchers, students, birdwatchers, hikers, and nature-lovers can work together to support important conservation programs. With a lean staff that focuses on bringing maximum resources to achieve strategic conservation and policy milestones, NWRA accomplished the following:



NWRA's leadership has resulted in increased funding for the Refuge System:

- **25% increase in Refuge System funding**, from 2008 - 2010 - over \$105 million.
- **\$290 million for the USFWS** in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- **\$257 million in emergency funding** for the Refuge System due to natural disasters since 2005.
- **\$4 million for the Invasives and Volunteers Program**, now institutionalized nationwide.

www.refugeassociation.org

- Led efforts to approve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which resulted in the President's creation of a 12,400,000-acre wilderness study area.
- Helped expand the 373,000,000 acre Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument and added it to the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is now the largest protected area network on planet Earth.
- Conserved over 5,300 acres of land in central Florida as part of Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge.
- With an authorization area of 920,000 acres across three states, Bear River Migratory Bird Conservation Area became the 565th unit of the Refuge System.
- Jumpstarted the Urban Wildlife Refuge Program around the nation to elevate the importance of wildlife refuges in urban areas.
- Trained refuge Friends organizations nationwide in fundraising, advocacy and board development and brought many to Capitol Hill to advocate for the Refuge System.

Legislative Action in 2017

This coming year will not be spent just playing defense. There are several opportunities to move forward on critical programs that will bolster the effectiveness of the Refuge System in conserving our nation's wildlife, including:

- Passing the Resource Protection Act to give the FWS the authority to seek and retain compensation directly from those who damage Refuge System resources.
- Leveraging the 30th anniversary of Partners for Fish and Wildlife program to reauthorize and increase funding for the FWS's most effective tool for building partnerships with private landowners to achieve landscape-scale conservation.

What's next, Friends?



Dear Friends,

If you read over that page of refuge stats, you saw that 212,033 people visited Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in 2016! 212,033 people discovered this unexpected gem along Lake Erie's southern shore. If we had to define success with a number, I think that would be it.



In 1807, my great-great-great-great grandfather came here— to Ottawa and Lucas County— to trap, hunt, and trade. I don't know if he ever thought about what this area would look like in 200 years, but here we are in a remnant of what once was. It is a gem indeed, but it is only a sliver of the wilderness that once canvassed the area.

This sliver of wetlands provides stopover habitat for thousands of migrating birds in the spring and fall. Visitors from far and wide travel here to witness great numbers of songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl as they feed and refuel in our marshes. This area consists of habitat that is critical to their survival. In addition, a resident population of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, pollinators, and plants call this place home.

It's not only the birds and wildlife that make this area significant. The wetlands are often called the "kidneys" of Lake Erie; filtering out a lot of the pollutants that —without the marshes— could just flow right into our lake and devastate both these precious ecosystems *and* our drinking water.

When those 212,033 people visited, we hope that they realized what we have here. Now is the time to protect our refuge for future generations, to make sure that these wetlands are here for years to come. **You can make a difference.**

What can you and your family do to help Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge? *Lots of things!*

- **Become a member.**
- **Volunteer your time and talents.**
- **Donate.**

Unrestricted dollars are so important to keep our organization up and running. Government funding unfortunately only covers a portion of the total expenses needed to manage this 10,000+ acre refuge. As Friends of Ottawa NWR, we are doing what we can to fill the void. As a 501(c)3 non-profit, we rely on the generous support of Friends members, volunteers, donors, and foundations to succeed.

We appreciate every donation, from the dollar that the visiting 8-year-old drops into our box, to the \$20,000 gifts we received this year. **Every bit counts.**

So, won't you help us to protect and preserve Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge?

Aimee Arent
Association Manager



