

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



Your National Wildlife Refuge



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

Ottawa NWR:

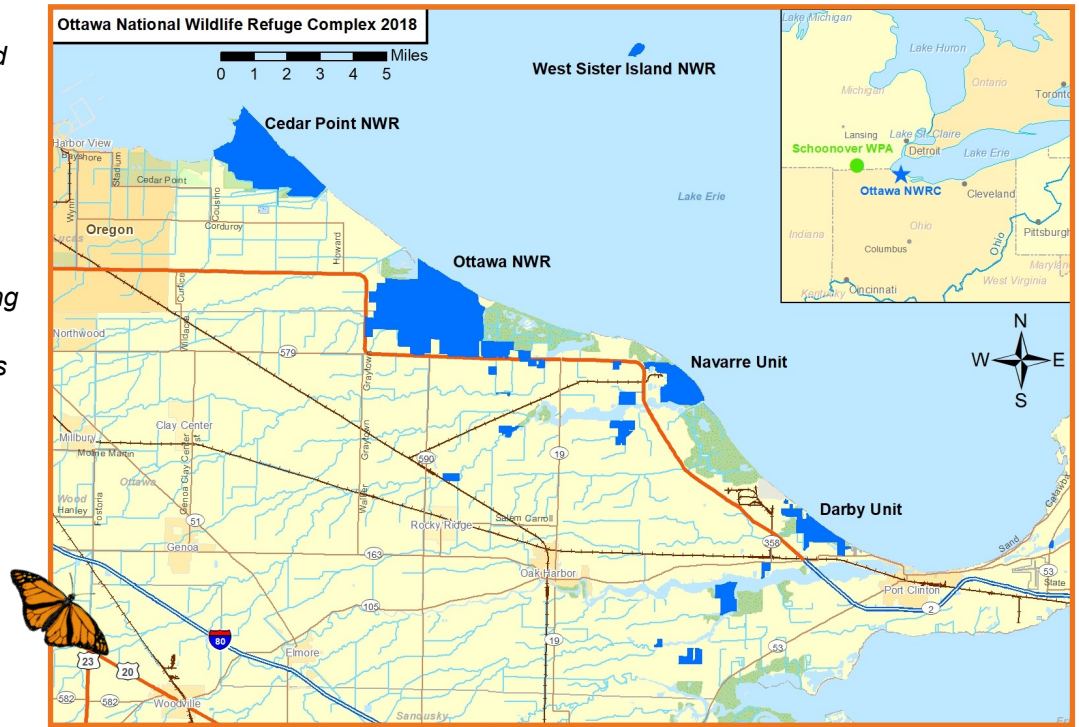
Located between Toledo and Port Clinton, this 7,513 acre refuge is managed for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrant songbirds, and a variety of plant and animal species. The three story Visitor Center and hiking trails are located here. A number of satellite properties are also part of this refuge.

Cedar Point NWR:

Cedar Point NWR's 2,616 acres comprise the largest contiguous marsh on Lake Erie. Aside from a designated fishing and kayaking area, access is by guided tour or permit only.

West Sister Island NWR:

This 82 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.



Part of a Larger System



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.

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.

For more information about the National Wildlife Refuge System, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and conservation priorities, visit www.fws.gov.

From the Manager's Desk...



Photo: Lori England Zornes

My favorite thing about being the Refuge Manager at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is interacting with the people. I know this might come as a surprise to some. I am a wildlife biologist, birdwatcher, and avid outdoor enthusiast and “people” are what I enjoy the most about my job. Every day I feel blessed to be able to come to work to serve the American people. I get to do work that will improve public health by managing healthy ecosystems. Dedicated and passionate conservation professionals who share my value for public service surround me. As dedicated conservation stewards, we work diligently to conserve, protect, and restore this great nation’s natural heritage. Our legacy is the acres of land conserved, restored, and protected; the healthy ecosystems we strive to manage; and the tens of thousands of visitors who come from all around the world to enjoy this wonderful resource. The team of volunteers, partners, and stakeholders that I work with each day inspire me. They live by the words, “If you can dream it, you can do it,”-- Walt Disney.

We dream together and we succeed together. All can tell the stories of our successes because we have lived them together and 2018 was a particularly “successful story filled” year.

One day during an unusually warm, sunny afternoon in early January 2019, I was on the second floor looking out the large windows to the south that overlook the Visitor Center Pond. Aimee Arent, Friends of Ottawa NWR Executive Director, was sitting on the window bench with her camera taking pictures. She had a smile on her face and a joyous appearance about her reminiscent of a child on Christmas morning. We both stood with excitement as we watched an excavator demolish an old abandoned house south of the refuge. This symbolic event was a reflection of our 2018 conservation successes and an illustration of what 2019 has planned for us all. Although, it was truly a wonderful way to end 2018 and begin 2019, it was a cliffhanger. This is a story we will all have to wait for 2019 to tell. It was indeed a special day, but 2018 had many special days and milestones.

The Refuge achievements of 2018 were due to the hard work and dedication of the volunteers, partners, and staff. Our successes were many, a feat worthy of celebrating. Some of the noteworthy accomplishments and milestones are highlighted in this report.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.” There is no doubt that our collective conservation success is a result of our unity of effort, a clarity of purpose and a shared vision of tomorrow. I am deeply grateful to everyone who supports the Refuge to ensure today is better than yesterday and tomorrow is better than today. I fear history will judge us unkindly for what we take and what we fail to give back. I hope you all will continue to support the Refuge to help us honor our responsibility to be good stewards of this wonderful natural resource for future generations.

Best Regards,

Jason P. Lewis

Refuge Manager



Letter from the President



2019-2020 Board President,
DR. JENNI BIEGALA



As we transition into 2019 it is only appropriate that we look back on 2018. It was a challenging year and I am so proud of my team, our members, and volunteers for helping us rise above the hurdles we faced. The year started out with a government shutdown in January and having to postpone the Love Your Refuge dinner due to a snowstorm. I know some of us were feeling pretty discouraged at that point, but interacting with visitors, members, and volunteers always reminds us of how important our mission is to the refuge and the community.

This summer as talk turned to the possibility of another algae bloom, agencies in the area began talking about how to make Lake Erie healthy again. One of the solutions is to increase marsh land which acts as a natural filter for the lake, and this is something that Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge has been working on with the help of FONWR and other groups. Several new parcels were added to the refuge for restoration and conservation and there will be more additions in 2019. In addition to this, watch for increased access to refuge properties for fishing, kayaking, hunting and other recreation.

Each year we strive to improve visitors' experiences at the refuge with events, speakers, tours, and other activities. We could not do this without our volunteers who help staff the events and our members who support FONWR and the refuge. If you stop out and see a school group on the refuge, remember that your donations brought them to the refuge. And the intern providing them with a fun and educational experience was also paid for through your donations and membership dollars.

I look forward to seeing you on the refuge this year and I hope you will support the refuge in a way you feel comfortable, be that donating, volunteering, or becoming a member. Remember, this is your refuge!

Jennifer Biegala

REFUGE/FRIENDS PARTNERSHIP 2018

\$56,956 TO REFUGE PROJECTS

In 2018, Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was able to provide nearly \$57,000 towards intern stipends, field trip grants for schools, as well as maintenance and restoration projects.



822 MEMBERS

Our membership base is growing! We are so excited to share our love for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge with supporters in 39 states around the country, and right here in Oak Harbor.

SPONSORED 7 INTERSHIPS

Friends of Ottawa NWR is proud to sponsor interns each year to support refuge projects while allowing students to build their resumes and skill sets. In 2018, we hosted a maintenance intern, three Visitor Services internships, a Hunt Program Intern, an Environmental Education Intern, and a Marketing and Outreach Intern. One of the best parts of this program is watching where students decide to take their next steps.



14,133 VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteers are incredibly important to the success of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. In 2018, volunteers conducted bird surveys, monitored water levels, built kiosks, greeted visitors at the front desk, led tours, mowed the grass, maintained the pollinator gardens, and so much more!

ALL FOR OTTAWA REFUGE

The refuge includes some of the only coastal marsh habitat open to Lake Erie. The benefits of marshes to the lake ecology and community health are undeniable. Find a way to support Ottawa NWR today. Become a member. Shop in the Rookery Nature Store. Volunteer. Visit today!

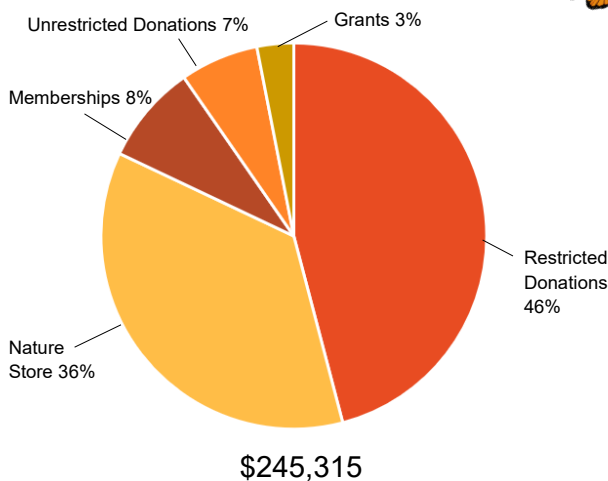


WWW.FRIENDSOFOTTAWANWR.ORG

Financials



2018 FRIENDS REVENUE

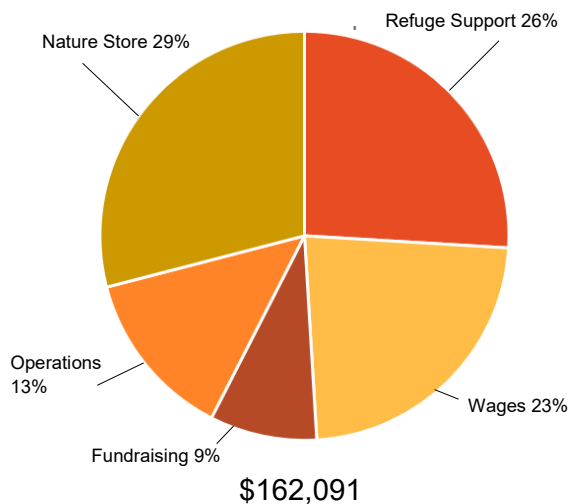


2018 Revenue & Expenditures

Government funding does not cover all that is necessary to manage a refuge. As a result, wildlife refuges depend on “Friends” groups like Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (FONWR) to fill in the gaps, providing financial and volunteer support. In 2018, support of Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge through all revenue streams totaled \$245,315.

A total of nearly \$57,000 went directly to helping the Refuge Complex and community in the areas of conservation, wildlife protection, research, law enforcement, and education. Refuge support includes items such as construction and maintenance projects, intern stipends, and field trip transportation. \$100,000 of our income is earmarked for a very special project in 2019. Stay tuned for updates!

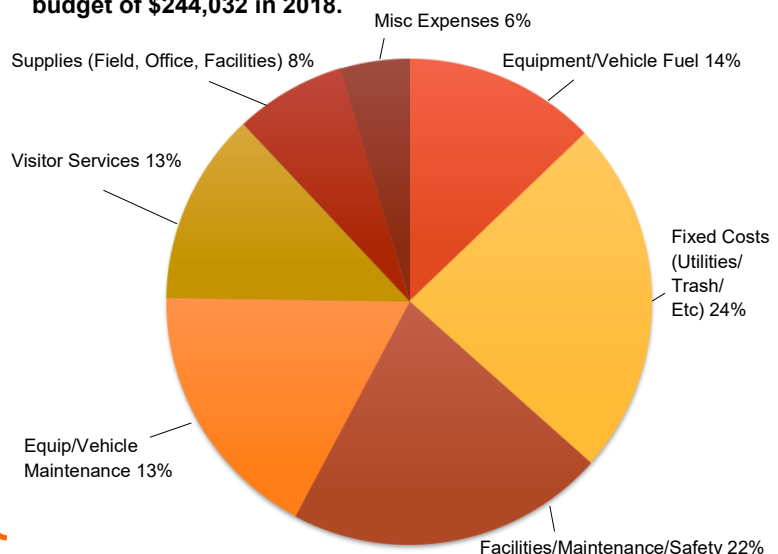
2018 FRIENDS EXPENSES



Support by Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is incredibly important to the ability of our refuge to thrive.

CONSIDER THIS...

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex had an operating budget of \$244,032 in 2018.



The Rookery Nature Store



We love to hear people's reactions when they first walk in The Rookery Nature Store. Folks just never expect to see such a diverse selection of items in such a small space. Our goal in The Rookery is to provide items that people can purchase, take home, and learn even more about nature. Whether it be a coffee mug, a field guide, or a piece of apparel, our Friends group loves finding new items to share with all of you! The best part is that funds raised through the store help to support Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge with conservation and education efforts.

2018 was another stellar year for The Rookery Nature Store, bringing in nearly \$104,000 in gross revenue. We are very proud of that number, especially considering that we had two government shutdowns and a flood to contend with. Those events combined forced us to close up shop for a total of 16 days, but we did our best to get right back to work as soon as we could.



We must thank our fantastic volunteers who were so much help to us this year. Gary Luman helped us design and install a slatwall display on the north wall of the store, providing many new ways to showcase items throughout the year. Interns and RV volunteers helped to change out seasonal displays, perform inventory, and ring up sales. We had six volunteers helping out in the store during the Biggest Week, helping us to amass nearly half of our income in the month of May. **We are so grateful, and we couldn't do it without you!**

Farewell, Catherine...

Nature Store Manager Catherine Traxler left our organization in December for a grand new adventure... She has accepted a position with the federal government and moved to New Mexico!

Catherine was employed by Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge for three years, and in that time helped to boost the store sales by 30%. The staff and board of directors commemorated Catherine's hard work with a small ceremony, presenting her with an achievement award. This girl loves her trees, and now we are so excited to see where a career in the U.S. Forest Service will take her.



Interns: Leaders of Tomorrow



My name is Matthew Siefert. I am from western Pennsylvania, have a Bachelor's in environmental biology, and am about to begin a Master's in biology. I came to the refuge as one of the Visitor Services interns for the summer of 2018. My fellow intern Dustin and I were responsible for running the summer camps held every year at the refuge, daily operations in the visitor center, and helping with miscellaneous projects as they arose. I helped replace a section of the boardwalk, installed informational signs at different sites, and even released a rehabilitated swan to the front pond. The large variety of projects and duties I was given helped to make this summer a truly unique experience, and resulted in an incredibly valuable and enjoyable experience for both myself and (hopefully) the visitors I spent time with.

The primary reason why I took this internship was to challenge myself. I knew coming into this that interacting with the public was a skill I hadn't worked on much, and I wanted to use this position as an opportunity to improve it. Working in the visitor center definitely helped me to strengthen my public relations simply by how dynamic of a job it was. Each day behind the desk brought with it new visitors, new tasks, and even new wildlife at times (I had a man come in that swore we had a flamingo in one of the wetlands). The mix between engaging with people that are passionate about what the refuge has to offer as well as the occasional unhappy visitor increased my confidence in my ability to interact with the public and I believe it will be a great asset when I begin my career in the near future.



As a camp counselor, my goal was to put a heavy emphasis on getting the kids to interact with the environment. We caught snakes, identified insects, went birding, and took full advantage of any other aspect of the local ecosystems that we could. I wanted them to have experiences similar to those that helped me discover my passion for the natural world when I was younger. I think it is crucial to instill an appreciation of nature in the next generation as we continue to work towards the conservation and preservation of our increasingly threatened ecosystems. My activities focused not only on teaching the kids what different plants and animals are, but also why they are important to the environment. It is my hope that they were able to both have fun and learn a few things during their time with me this summer.

My internship was a very rewarding and enjoyable experience for me. I attribute most of the fun I had



working at Ottawa to the people I worked with. The faculty, volunteers, and Friends Group are full of knowledgeable, hardworking people that made the Refuge a wonderful place to intern at. The experiences and tasks I performed gave me experience and skills that I believe will be helpful to me as I pursue both my Master's and a career in environmental work. My time at Ottawa was incredibly valuable to me both professionally and personally, and I will always be thankful for being given this opportunity.

Matt Siefert
Visitor Services Intern

Partners for Fish and Wildlife



The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is the United States Fish and Wildlife Service program that assists private landowners with habitat restoration projects. Jeff Finn is the Private Lands Biologist stationed at Ottawa NWR.

“Despite having an all-time low budget for restoration projects, we were able to partner with other agencies and organizations like Ohio Division of Wildlife, Ottawa County Soil and Water Conservation District and Ducks Unlimited to make our funding go much further. The program received over 900% matching funds and in kind contributions for Partners projects in 2018.

We were able to complete 4 different projects that restored 43 acres of wetland and 72 acres of grassland. Leveraging other funding to get projects done is becoming more and more important. In 2018, we were able to leverage \$210,500 in other state and federal funds to help complete our projects this year. We were able to treat nearly 700 acres of invasive phragmites and flowering rush with the help of an invasive species grant the refuge received. We used a helicopter to complete the treatments. Treatments were done on the refuge along with 5

private landowners in the area. The PFW program also made significant headway on getting several other projects started, but not completed in 2018. 2019 should be another good year. As the Private Lands Biologist, I assist with a wide array of activities both on and off refuge. I went on two wildfire details, one to Arizona and one to Seney Refuge in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I was also fortunate enough to assist Agassiz Refuge complete prescribed burns on several thousand acres in Northern Minnesota. I did a number of public presentations, one of which included a talk about prescribed fire ignitions at the Ohio Prescribed Fire Council annual meeting that had 65 attendees.”



This is a snapshot of a wetland restoration we did along the Toussaint River in Ottawa County. The project was half way completed when the picture was taken. This site will experience a lot of shorebird use and help filter agricultural field runoff.



Jeff Finn

Private Lands Biologist



Conservation At Home



CREATING YOUR OWN

BACKYARD REFUGE

Where to begin?

THE BASICS OF LIFE

Let's start with the basics. What do birds and wildlife need? Does your yard have food, water, and shelter for species you are trying to attract? Setting up a bird bath or pond is a great start.



Plant native trees and flowers.

THE POWER OF HOST PLANTS

Give butterflies a boost. Species like the monarch nectar on many types of plants, but they need milkweed for reproduction: it's the only plant they will lay eggs on!



Skip the yard work this fall.

EASY HABITAT THAT SAVES YOUR BACK

Hate raking leaves? Leave them where they fall for an instant layer of protection for insects that overwinter here. Stack up twigs into a brush pile or create a pollinator plaza to shelter all kinds of wildlife.



How can I attract birds?

BIRD FEEDING FOR ALL KINDS

You can feed birds all year: sunflower seeds, suet, and whole peanuts can draw in quite a crowd. Planting berry bushes and nut trees are natural ways to feed birds while providing shelter as well.



Enjoy coming home.

PEACE AND SERENITY

A backyard refuge can have some great benefits for you, too. Being in nature makes us feel calm, happy, and hopeful.



BUILD YOUR REFUGE TODAY!



Photo: Carol Fingerhut

In Memory of Kathy Booher

September 5, 1961 - October 19, 2018

One of the hardest things we had to do this year was say goodbye to board member, Kathy Booher. Kathy was an amazing soul who touched many lives as the Extension Educator for Ottawa County. She lit up any time she was able to work with kids (probably because she never grew up herself.) Kathy was part of our fundraising team and kept us on our toes with her stamina, endless ideas and can-do attitude. She is sorely missed by us all.



Biology Program



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was the site of 17 research projects in 2018. They include:

- ◆ *Implementing a Great Lakes Basin-Wide Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program* (University of Windsor)
- ◆ *Amphibian and Reptile Survey of Ottawa and Cedar Point NWRs* (Toledo Zoo)
- ◆ *Use of reconnected Lake Erie coastal wetlands by Northern Pike* (Bowling Green State University)
- ◆ *Responses of Colonial Wading Bird Populations (Black-crowned night-heron) to Management within the Lake Erie Marsh Focus Area* (Ohio State University)
- ◆ *Point count bird surveys of Cedar Point NWR* (Toledo Naturalist's Association)
- ◆ *Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program, breeding frog and bird surveys* (Central Michigan University)
- ◆ *Population Ecology and Habitat Relationships of Sora & Virginia Rails in Northwestern Ohio* (Ohio State University)
- ◆ *Common Tern nesting platform monitoring and banding* (Winous Point Marsh Conservancy)
- ◆ *Spring and fall songbird migration monitoring, Darby unit*
- ◆ *Effects of harmful algal blooms on aquatic wildlife health (frogs and turtles)* (University of Toledo)
- ◆ *King Rail Migration, Breeding Home Range, and Habitat Use in Lake Erie Coastal Wetlands* (Central Michigan University)
- ◆ *Migrational Movements and Habitat Usage of Migrant Passerines in the Great Lakes Region* (Black Swamp Bird Observatory)
- ◆ *Habitat Usage of Breeding Passerines in the Great Lakes Region* (Black Swamp Bird Observatory)
- ◆ *Monitoring of nutrient and turbidity during seiche events between Lake Erie and the Cedar Point wetland* (U.S. Geological Survey)
- ◆ *Monitoring stands of native and invasive Phragmites australis* (U.S. Geological Survey)
- ◆ *Impacts of Nutrient Loads on Invasion Potential of Butomus umbellatus (Flowering rush)* (Bowling Green State University)
- ◆ *Tracking down tempests: The detection & analysis of sediment deposits from storm-induced flooding along the Great Lakes' coasts* (University of Michigan-Dearborn)



In 2018, we continued habitat management for black-crowned night-herons on West Sister Island to increase shrub nesting habitat used by this declining species. Extensive time was spent on restoration implementation and planning for the Weber and Schiller properties (in partnership with Ducks Unlimited with funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative), tree planting at Two Rivers, and the Stange Prairie restoration project. The biology crew also manages the refuge trapping program which is used to keep muskrat populations in balance with habitat conditions, and prevent damage to critical infrastructure such as dikes and water control structures.

Wildlife and habitat surveys completed during 2018 included Marsh Monitoring Program for frogs and marsh birds, annual colonial waterbird counts on West Sister Island, federally threatened **Eastern prairie fringed orchid** population counts, monitoring for new invasive plant species and muskrat population surveys. High lake levels negatively impacted orchid populations, as one of the populations was completely flooded out and produced only 2 flowering plants. The Refuge also received a \$146,000 Invasive Species Management grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The funds were used to treat nearly 800 acres of phragmites within the Lake Erie marshes. These funds will provide extra staffing resources and additional treated acres in 2019.



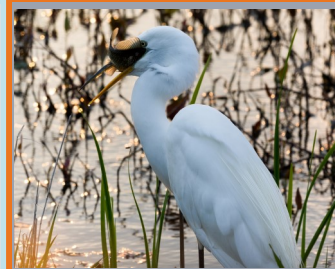
Ron Huffman

Refuge Biologist

MANAGING WATER LEVELS & INVASIVES

Aerial Spraying:

- assisted Private Lands team with spraying 700 acres on refuge and private property
- 50 acres treated from the sky
- 40 acres of spot treatment for early detection and high priority invasive plant species



The list of structures that we manage include:

- 57 water control structures
- 46 culverts
- 18 electric pump stations
- 18 flap gates
- 9 portable pumps
- 7 fish passages

In 2018, we dealt with a number of flood mitigation issues as a result of Lake Erie water levels reaching their highest levels in the last 20 years.

Restoration Projects



TWO RIVERS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired this 303.69 acre property in Bay Township, Ottawa County. Two Rivers is located at the confluence of the Portage and Little Portage Rivers. There is a heron rookery on the property with more than 280 great blue heron nests! This riparian floodplain restoration has been planted with native grasses and trees.

WEBER AND SCHILLER

Ducks Unlimited donated two parcels of land totaling 128.5 acres to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Weber and Schiller properties were acquired with Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds. The properties will be restored to native fish and wildlife habitats.

LAKEFRONT PRESERVE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed a Cooperative Management Agreement with the City of Port Clinton to manage, in partnership, the 14.74 acre Lakefront Preserve located near downtown Port Clinton.



WEST HARBOR LANDING

The 15.98 acre public access site, located on Catawba Island off Highway 53, was officially opened to visitors in 2018. The site is part of the Lake Erie Island Water Trail and hosts a boat launch to promote canoeing and kayaking. The Friends and Refuge staff have partnered with Camp Perry Red Horse Squadron, the Catawba Island Garden Club, other local groups and individual donors to develop the site and bring this recreation access area to the community.

STANGE PRAIRIE

This habitat restoration project was implemented in 2018. The project will restore and enhance more than 300 acres of wetlands, prairie and forest habitats along the Wildlife Drive. The refuge restored the wetland hydrology by removing 2,500 feet earthen dikes or berms and reconnecting the project area to Lake Erie. In addition, the Refuge collaborated with Ducks Unlimited, Energy Transfer Partners, Benton Township and Ottawa County to replace a culvert at the Krause and Stange Road intersection with an improved water control structure. In 2019, the refuge will plant 17 acres of wet prairie and 5 acres of trees and shrubs within the project area.



KNORN PROPERTY

In 2018, the 62.2 acre Knorn property underwent a restoration transformation. The refuge planted 30 acres of native grasses and wildflowers creating a sea of colorful pollinator habitat attracting the attention of the community. In 2019, the Refuge will reforest 20 acres of the property with native shrubs and trees. The Refuge also collaborated with the University of Toledo Civil Engineering class to develop a detailed engineering plan for the property's proposed public use facilities. A team of five UT Senior engineering students worked with refuge staff to develop the plan and proposed budget for the future of the Knorn Property. The Refuge has some great plans for the future of the Knorn property. The Friends will play an important role in implementing the plan and helping the Refuge realize the vision of this property over the next several years. Stay tuned for good things to come at Knorn, even a name change.

TURTLE CREEK

A parking area was constructed with the support of Ducks Unlimited, Energy Transfer Partners, and the Friends. A non-motorized boat launch will be developed in 2019 to promote canoeing/kayaking and fishing within Turtle Creek.



HELLE AND PRICE/ADAMS

The Refuge opened the Helle and Price/Adams units to public hunting. This 228 acre parcel is the first public hunting area ever developed on the refuge. Ducks Unlimited, Energy Transfer Partners and the Friends funded the development of two parking areas to promote hunter and other user access to these newly opened public use areas. The Helle unit will also see the development of a canoe/kayak boat launch in 2019 to promote paddling and fishing along the Toussaint Creek. The Refuge officially opened 747 acres to hunting throughout the complex.

Visitor Services and Education



A dedicated cadre of volunteers, interns, and staff made 2018 a record setting year for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and the visitor services program! As ambassadors for conservation, public lands, and outdoor recreation, these individuals are integral to the success of Ottawa NWR and vital for visitors who want to have a safe and enjoyable visit at the refuge. Through their efforts, visitors are greeted and treated to world renowned wildlife and once in a lifetime experiences that create giddy smiles and leave long-lasting impressions. The “thank you” notes visitors send often remind us how great our volunteers are and how blessed we are to work at Ottawa NWR. Here are some of the highlights from a great 2018...



Record Setting Highlights

The below highlights showcase new milestones and reflect the amplified interest in, and capacity of, the refuge due to efficient operations and volunteer support.

VISITATION AND PROGRAMS

The refuge hosted:

- ◆ 334,606 Visits
- ◆ 36,682 Visitor Center Guests
- ◆ 47,290 Wildlife Drive Explorers
- ◆ 20,367 Special Event Participants
- ◆ 1,528 Fishing Visits

SPRING MIGRATION

May 2018

The refuge hosted:

- ◆ 81,453 Visits
- ◆ 12,450 Visitor Center Guests
- ◆ 1,355 Children for environmental education field trips
- ◆ 28 individuals from around the country assisted with spring events

VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS

The volunteer program continues to grow! Ottawa was blessed with the assistance of 82 volunteers who contributed 14,133 hours of service.

- ◆ Visitor Services: ~7,000 hours
- ◆ Maintenance: ~3,500 hours
- ◆ Biology: ~3,500 hours

These collective hours represent the combined work capacity of **seven full-time refuge employees**. Volunteers help to offset staffing cuts and reduced capacity of Refuge staff to address the increasing management challenges throughout the Refuge. The Volunteer program is critical to the success of the Refuge.



Impressive Statistics:

The below highlights may not be record setting, but they're still impressive!

- ◆ The refuge hosted 5,529 children for environmental education field trips and 5,155 interpretive program participants.
- ◆ The refuge hosted 27,552 wildlife drive explorers; 1,846 interpretive program participants during Spring Migration (Month of May, aka Mayhem).
- ◆ The refuge continues to work with Bowling Green State University and The University of Toledo to offer internship opportunities to current students and recent graduates. In 2018, the refuge hosted 9 internships (6 visitor services, 2 biology, and 1 maintenance). The refuge also hosted 15 resident RV volunteers and 5 Artist-in-Residence program participants. The artisan's goods are on display and showcase how public lands inspire artists who encourage conservation.





Community Engagement

Ottawa NWR made a strategic effort to implement goals associated with national initiatives to better serve our communities and constituents. Recognizing that 80% of Americans live in urban areas, and that the demographics of America continue to change, staff allocated more time and resources to work with diverse partners in urban areas. We assisted Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge with four special events, attended community festivals around Cleveland and started the “Fish with a Warden Day” event in partnership with Adelate, The Latino Resource Center of Toledo. Each kid left the event with a new fishing pole and the skills needed for a lifetime of fishing fun.

We participated in a number of festivals and events around the region. One day we were even at three events in three states: Monarch Festival in Indiana, Waterfowl Festival in Ohio, and the Great Outdoors Jamboree in Michigan. We had engaging activities and crafts at each event and interacted with over 1,500 people! It was just a few weeks later that we earned another 1st Place trophy for our float at the Apple Festival in Oak Harbor.

We also partnered with the National Park Service, Perry’s Victory & International Peace Memorial, and assisted each other during busy special events. We were fortunate to interact with over 450 students at “Perry Education Days” and appreciated the assistance of ranger Kathie during spring mayhem.



Public Use Enhancements

We continue to improve facilities and services to ensure visitors have a safe and enjoyable visit. More of the refuge is open more often. That alone has made many folks happy, and has increased recreational opportunities like fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, canoeing, and kayaking. We developed and installed interpretive waysides on trails, kiosks with maps and information at the Boss Unit, Cedar Point, West Harbor Landing, and the Wildlife Drive, and we built and installed fishing line recycling stations. We created the Kids Zone in the visitor center to provide families with self-guided engaging activities and crafts. The “Junior Ranger” programs are especially popular with many youngsters earning their official ranger badge. Before visitors enjoy the refuge in person, many visit our online resources to plan their trip. Rebecca Lewis has led the effort with website and social media work for the refuge and was able to enhance information on the Private Lands Program, Hunting Program, Volunteer Program, and public use maps. Our Facebook following continues to grow as well, with more than 6,000 friends.



We’re excited for another successful year and hope to see you on the refuge soon!

Justin Wolcott
Visitor Services Manager

Teamwork for Conservation



If I had to define 2018 with one word, it would be **'teamwork'**. Our Friends group has been working more closely with Refuge staff and partners in our efforts to assist with larger projects which will leave a lasting impact on our local community and support national conservation initiatives. This year, we were proud to have collaborated with Refuge staff to work on restoring habitat and creating conceptual plans and raising funds for several new properties.

It's one thing to dream and plan out a site, and quite another thing to see it come to fruition. I was so excited to see the parking lots completed at the Helle and Turtle Creek Units which will provide fishing and kayak access to the Turtle and Toussaint Creeks in the near future. When a grant came through from the Sandusky County Community Foundation in October, we realized that we will be able to make progress on the fishing access at the Visitor Center pond. Kids will have a safe and accessible place to fish as we build on this site in 2019. And it was through your help that FONWR was able to raise over \$12,000 towards West Harbor Landing on Catawba Island during our #GivingTuesday campaign. Work has already begun there. Have you seen it? It's a lovely spot to connect with nature.

Any good team sticks together through good and bad, and we had our share of hard times in 2018. Ice storms, floods, and government shutdowns kept us on our toes. Hardest of all was saying goodbye to a beloved board member and friend this fall. Yet there through it all, our friends and refuge staff stayed a team and stayed focused on our goals for Ottawa NWR and conservation.

You are all a part of the team as well. After all, where would we be without the support of the community? That is why we are especially excited to share some special news with all of you in 2019. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and sign up for e-news... *We can't wait to let you in on the secret.*

Preserving these lands is the reason that we all come to work each day, but it's the little things that make it special... like seeing the wonder on a student's face during monarch migration when thousands of butterflies cover the trees. You're the reason that we all love what we do. Your support is the reason we have the ability to make connections with the stewards of tomorrow. Thank you for all that you do to preserve Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, now and forever.



Aimee Arent
Executive Director



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Jeff Finn, *Private Lands Biologist*
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Rebecca Lewis, *Visitor Services Specialist*
Joshua Bauer, *Federal Wildlife Officer*
Chuck Shier, *Maintenance Mechanic*
Ramsay Houze, *Maintenance Worker*
Morgan Donaldson, *Bio Tech*
Buck Buchanan, *Laborer*

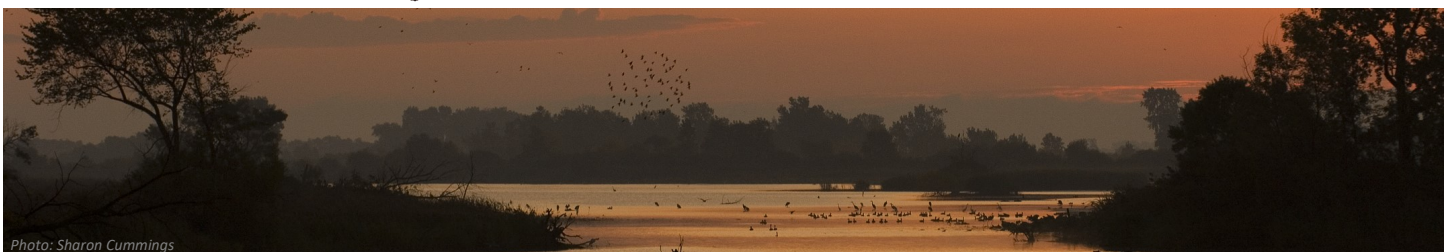


Photo: Sharon Cummings

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Have you purchased your Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge license plates? \$20 of each plate directly supports conservation projects at YOUR national wildlife refuge. These are available at BMVs across the state of Ohio.



NATIONAL Wildlife Refuge ASSOCIATION

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

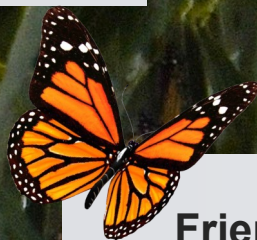
- **25% increase in Refuge System funding**, from 2008 - 2010 - over \$105 million.
- **\$290 million for the USFWS** in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- **\$257 million in emergency funding** for the Refuge System due to natural disasters since 2005.
- **\$4 million for the Invasives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

www.refugeassociation.org

Cover Photo:

In September 2018, an estimated 30,000 monarch butterflies roosted in the trees at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge during fall migration.

Photo: Dorthy Baker



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14000 W State Route 2 Oak Harbor, OH 43449

www.friendsofottawanwr.org

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