

The Otter's Tale

Newsletter of the Friends of Pool 9

April, 2010



It happened early this year, around the first of March while we were in Arizona. The ice “went out” and the upper Mississippi sprang back to life. With its exit came the return of waves of migratory waterfowl and the sounds of spring. The backwaters are bustling with noise and excitement. This sentence leads me to our first activity for 2010. Ric Zarwell and his committee organized a Kids Digital Workshop (March 25-26-27) that was absolutely spectacular. I visited the New Albin classroom of Lisa Welsh and witnessed the excitement first hand of 24 students becoming camera-bugs. The idea is to lead them (and their parents) to the Upper Miss Refuge with a Kids Photo Contest later this summer. The team presented it to the classroom of Robin Hoseman in De Soto as well and also had a nearly filled-to-capacity adult workshop on Saturday. All costs were paid by Friends of Pool 9 (through an ACCF grant) and interest in nature (and the Refuge) was multiplied many times over. Thanks to Ric and Betty, Mark Schneden, Tim Loose, Cecil Johnson and teachers Welsh and Hoseman for making it happen, it was fantastic.

The Annual McGregor District Volunteer Appreciation Banquet in February was a resounding success. Details follow in a brief article. In early March we sent members Ric Zarwell and Mark Schneden to Washington to voice Congressional funding concerns for the Refuge System.

FOP9 is signing a partnership agreement with the US Army Corps of Engineers, called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate working with them on several projects. The signing will reduce paperwork later on as the years' projects unfold. We signed a similar agreement with US Fish & Wildlife Service when we formed as FOP9, and it has worked successfully over the years. Two Corps/FOP9 projects on the immediate horizon are Tree Planting and the River Clean Up. We'll

be planting ash, walnut, oak, and willow saplings on the channel islands selected for reforestation. This is a big hands-on project that will require many volunteers. Our Pool-wide Clean Up is scheduled for Saturday May 1, so mark your calendars. Glen Springer (538-9232) is again in charge of planning and is awaiting your phone call to tell him you'll be there.

A Region 3 Midwest Friends Conference (from the eight states of Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio) will take place in La Crosse, WI on April 16-17-18. Your FOP9 Board of Directors will be in attendance and making a presentation on the Mississippi River Adventure Day (MRAD) activity.

Many other projects are also in full swing; MOCC (Motorboat Operator Certification, Spring 2009) trained FOP9 members are counting eagle nest activity throughout the pool, portable toilets are being placed at numerous sites around Pool 9, Reno Bottoms Canoe Trail maps are available and being placed at points of entry, Iowa Department of Agriculture has again asked for our assistance in placing Emerald Ash Borer traps on the Refuge, we'll be assisting with the Kee 6th grade River Ed Day in May, and we're planning our Third Annual Mississippi River Adventure Day for kids and parents in July.

We just received notification that the Allamakee County Community Foundation (ACCF) has selected Friends of Pool 9 for a \$2,000 grant to support the Kids Digital Camera Workshop and Kids Photo Contest. We are appreciative of their generosity, thank you ACCF. And we celebrate the donation of \$300 from the Lansing based organization known as Nightcrawlers Forever, thank you very much as well.

Sounds like another great year is unfolding before us; see you on the water. **We can and are** making a difference on the Mississippi and across this nation.

John

McGregor District Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

On Saturday night, February 6, 2010 approximately 150 volunteers, guests, and USF&WS staff gathered in McGregor for the District's annual appreciation dinner. Ann Blankenship and the McGregor District Staff did a great job with the event. The meal was tasty and the presentations surprising and meaningful. Phyl Verdon was recognized for her hours of commitment to FOP9 with her 1000 Hour Pin and John Verdon received a River Guardian Award from Kevin Foerster, Upper Miss Refuge Manager. Jerry Boardman received the FOP9 Volunteer of the Year Award for all of his work on the Refuge.

Boardman was recognized for his ongoing commitment to projects related to stewardship on the Mississippi River. He is a Board member, has worked on the river clean-ups, the Mississippi River Adventure Days, helped set and check the Emerald Ash Borer traps, recaptured 15 channel buoys from the Mississippi backwater, helped with the Ferryville Buoy Placement project, and has volunteered as a student mentor for the De Soto Community Schools to promote awareness and appreciation of the Mississippi. Verdon also added that "with his background as a commercial fisherman he brings a valued and respected level of understanding to the Board of Directors of Friends of Pool 9." We salute Jerry Boardman as the Volunteer of the Year.



Phyl Verdon received her 1000 Hour Pin at the USF&WS appreciation dinner from Ann Blankenship.

Jerry Boardman (right) receives the Friends of Pool 9 Volunteer of the Year Award from President John Verdon (left). The award was presented at the annual McGregor District U.S. Fish & Wildlife Appreciation Banquet, on February 7, 2010.



This evening and dinner, on behalf of the McGregor District US Fish & Wildlife Service is as meaningful and heartwarming as anything can be to the volunteers of this District. Friends of Pool 9 is truly fortunate (and appreciative) to work with such caring and responsible professionals, to the benefit of wildlife and the Mississippi River as well.

Friends of Pool 9 Annual Pool-wide Clean-Up "May Day on the Mississippi"

Friends of Pool 9 members are making plans for our annual Mississippi River clean up. Volunteers should mark the date of May 1, 2010 on their calendars. As in the past, dumpsters will be located at Lansing, Black Hawk Park, and Ferryville. Glen Springer has again volunteered to be the event organizer and can be reached at 563-538-9232 for information and details.

The event will officially begin at 8:00 A.M. with all volunteers reading and signing the Volunteer Safety Form. Those under 18 years of age must also have a signed Parental Permission Form, available from John Verdon (538-4836) or Glen Springer (538-9232). Launch sites will be at Lansing (VFW building), Visgers Landing, Black Hawk Park, Ferryville Landing, and Heytman Landing. Lunch will be served at the Lansing site and delivered to Visgers and Black Hawk Park as well. Gloves, garbage bags, and water will also be supplied to all volunteers. Personal flotation devices (life jackets) are required to be worn at all times on the water, and will be available at the sites. Individuals may bring and wear their own life jackets if they are Coast Guard Approved.

In addition to the river corridor clean up this year the US Army Corps of Engineers has asked that we assist with a reforestation project (bank stabilization) on some of the

islands along the channel. We will need 10 to 15 workers to plant 500 saplings on the islands across the channel from Black Hawk Park. They will be provided gloves, water, and tools necessary for planting. This would be a good project for a group of students from area schools to undertake.

A planning meeting for the clean up has been scheduled for **Monday, April 19, 2010 starting at 6 P.M., at the Kerndt Brothers Community Center in Lansing.** All interested area citizens should attend. You need not be a member of Friends of Pool 9 to take part in the clean up. As always; your support is needed to make it a successful "May Day on the Mississippi".

Together we can do great things.



Mike Verdon (float-coat pfd) and a boat full of debris collected from the Big Slough area during the 2009 FOP9 Mississippi River clean up.

Friends Provide Three Successful Digital Photography Workshops in March

By Ric Zarwell

Digital cameras have become highly popular over the film cameras that were popular over the past 30 to 50 years. In fact, film cameras are now nearly as obsolete as manual typewriters. With this in mind, along with a strong desire to more closely connect both young people and adults on both sides of the Mississippi River to the natural world, three productive and enjoyable hands-on digital photography workshops were recently provided by our Friends group.

Training sessions were arranged using 30 small but quality Canon cameras with zoom lenses provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Long-time photographer and Friends member Cecil Johnson, of Savanna, IL, served as instructor and provided many important tips and lots of encouragement. The initial workshop took place March 25th, with 23 enthusiastic students in Lisa Welsh's 4th grade class in New Albin, IA learning the basics of digital photography and then taking numerous photos of wildlife and natural habitats during a walk on the Army Road east of New Albin.

The second training took place on March 26th and involved 18 middle school students in DeSoto, WI. Teacher Robin Hosemann made arrangements at the school, and after indoor training and practice with the cameras, students captured many interesting photos in the school greenhouse and during a hike around the perimeter of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery. Photos taken by all students in both workshops were later downloaded to a computer and are being provided to their teachers on a CD. The students will then use computers at their respective schools along with their own ingenuity and creativity to tell a story about what they found to photograph during their half-day experience with digital cameras.

Digital photos taken by students at these workshops may be used in any number of ways that are now under discussion. Examples include: downloading all photos onto CDs that each participant can keep (and email their photos to others); creating attractive prints of selected photos; providing prizes for winners of photo contests in several categories; and displaying winning photos in school newsletters or yearbooks, or on school websites or the Friends of Pool 9 website.

On Saturday, March 27th, it was the adults turn to increase knowledge and skills with their own digital cameras or with the provided cameras. Within a few days of announcing this workshop in one newspaper on each side of the river,



Students in Lisa Welsh's 4th grade class in New Albin were very excited to learn how to use digital cameras, and then to practice photography outdoors. Photo by Betty Zarwell

thirty adults phoned in to register and a waiting list had to be created. This hands-on learning experience was held at a Kee High School in Lansing, IA, where instructor Cecil Johnson went into more detail about what to do and not do with digital cameras, and the outdoor time to practice new or corrected techniques was spent on Mt. Hosmer.

There was no cost to participants for any of these three workshops, and each learning experience took place in a friendly and informative atmosphere. When participants were broken into smaller groups for more personal discussions, the instructor was assisted at all three workshops by Friends members Mark Schneden of Lynxville, and Betty and Ric Zarwell of Lansing.

Hands-on training helps people of all ages take the kinds of very high quality digital photos that are now the standard for websites, nature magazines, new books, art galleries, etc. The obvious popularity of this series of workshops means that additional opportunities to learn or improve digital photography techniques will be offered again in the future.

As with so many Friends projects and activities, please watch your website at www.friendsofpool9.org or this newsletter, for announcements. Or, alternatively, you may phone any member of your board of directors. Learning to use the basic techniques that experts concentrate on to capture incredible photos of wildlife and other scenes in nature is easier than you might think - and knowing these tips connects people more closely to the richness of Pool 9.

*A true conservationist is a man who knows
that the world is not given by his fathers
but borrowed from his children
John James Audubon*

*People who say it cannot be done should not
interrupt those who are doing it.
Anonymous*

Friends of Pool 9
P.O. Box 455
Lansing, IA 52151



FOP9 Needs Website Manager

The Friends of Pool 9 website (friendsofpool9.org) is in need of someone to update and manage it. Time constraints and field commitments leave little time for Tim Loose to address the needs of the site. And it's our responsibility to find someone from within the membership of Friends of Pool 9 to manage and run the site. It can be done in the confines of your own home and represents another method of volunteerism to FOP9. Anyone having access to a computer could be trained to manage the site. Call Tim Loose at 563-873-3423 ext. 11 or John Verdon at 563-538-4836 if this is something you would be willing to do for Friends of Pool 9.



The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc. is a grassroots citizen action group, whose sole purpose is the protection, restoration, and preservation of our natural resources. The 400 member organization has no dues requirements, and pays for its activities through donations and grants. It is a 501c3 federally tax exempt organization, all donations are tax deductible. The communities that border Pool 9 are its primary contributors and supporters.

JACKSON ST. 708 N. Jackson St.
P R E S S Charles City, IA 50616
866-508-3257

Calendar of Events:

May Day Planning Meeting

Monday, April 19, 2010

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Kerndt Brothers Community Center

Tree Planting with the US Army Corps of Engineers

9:00 am - Saturday, April 24 (May 1 Rain Date)

Blackhawk Park, De Soto, WI

Contact tim_loose@fws.gov for info

May Day on the Mississippi

Pool Wide Cleanup Day

Saturday, May 1, 2010

Mississippi River Adventure Day

Monday, July 19, 2010

Friends of Pool 9 Refuge Week Celebration,
Annual Awards Banquet and Business Meeting
Tentative Date - Saturday, October 9, 2010