

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



We exist because...

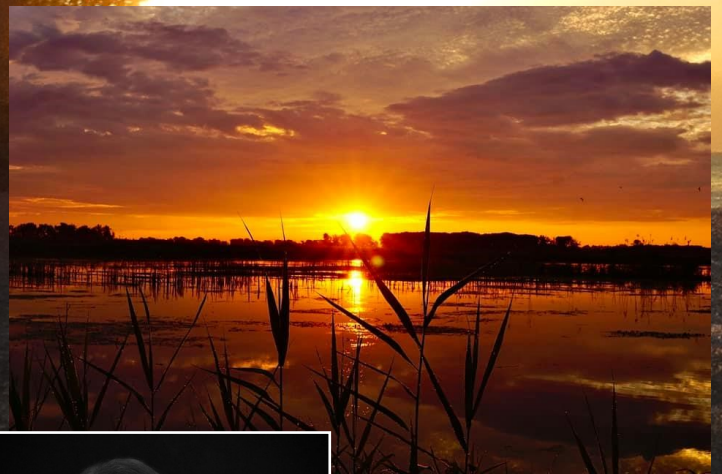


Fresh water is a finite resource. We are working to protect it. The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex is located along the southern shore of Lake Erie, the 11th largest lake in the world. The Great Lakes contain about 20% of the world's fresh water but they are in jeopardy. The wetlands of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge play a critical role in the Lake Erie ecosystem, acting as the kidneys of the landscape; working to protect NW Ohio's drinking water, work, and leisure. They also provide important nesting and stopover habitat for birds, fish, and wildlife. Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge works to support Ohio's only national wildlife refuge complex through fundraising and volunteerism so that we can be the change that our wildlife and community deserve.

"The value of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is immeasurable and invaluable. It is not only a place to preserve nature, habitat and wildlife but also a place so many come to learn, rest & recharge and find beauty our souls long for. As the creator of this photo, I cannot take credit for nature's beauty but I am happy to have captured it to share with you here.

For many nature photos from ONWR and much more please search on Instagram for [rocksannecoco_photo](#) or contact me by email at Roxanne.collins@me.com "

*—Roxanne Collins,
2020 Annual Report Cover Photographer*



Dear Friends & Supporters,

We hope this report finds you and your family safe and healthy. The effects of coronavirus reached us all in one way or another, but we are all in this together. To all who have lost a loved one, please accept our deepest condolences.

You already know that this past year is one for the record books so I will not reiterate all of the challenges that we faced. This Annual Report will highlight the incredible successes that we had because of you. As you read the financial report, you'll see that the two properties the Friends acquired in 2019 officially became part refuge, adding 40.56 acres to the refuge complex. And we were able to almost break even, despite the fact that we were unable to lean on our largest funding source, The Rookery Nature Store.

The Friends organization continues to be guided by its mission and 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 numerous individuals who are responsible for the success of our organization. You can find them among the following:

- ◆ **FONWR Members** – Members are the rock foundation of the Friends organization. It is through members that we receive much of the critical financial and volunteer assistance that we need to make our organization a success.
- ◆ **FONWR Donors** – We cannot express our great appreciation to the many individuals and businesses who support our refuge through monetary and in-kind donations to our Friends group. Your donations made 2020 a surprisingly successful year.
- ◆ **Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Staff** – We work with a fantastic U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff to make the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge a sanctuary for wildlife and provide wonderful experiences 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.
- ◆ **And last but not the least, our very talented and committed FONWR employees** – We have two great employees and without their dedication, passion and creativity, we would not have had the success that we did have in 2020. They are our Executive Director Aimee Arent and our Nature Store Clerk Julia Hinca.



organization's programs and projects. Please contact us for more information on how you can help.

Read on to learn about our successes in 2020 as well as our plans for 2021. We look forward to a very exciting and optimistic 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

Sincerely,

Pete Schwager

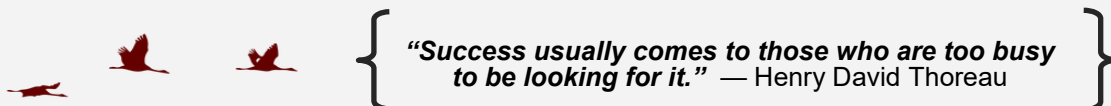
2020 Friends Board President

From the Manager's Desk



A Year to Remember or Forget?

What a year to remember, right? Like many of you I feel compelled to just want to forget 2020. After all who wants to remember toilet paper shortages, a year without The Biggest Week in American Birding, stay-at-home orders, quarantining, and all the other unpleasant memories of a global pandemic? However, 2020 wasn't all bad for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Like many of you, we made the most of it. The Ottawa Refuge family came together and held true to the cliché, "when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade". We made some wonderful lemonade and delivered on our promise to the American people. **With the support of the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, all of our wonderful volunteers, dedicated staff and partners, and the record-setting visitation, we persevered together drawing strength from our unity and conservation successes.**



It was truly a busy year. The refuge saw record visitation, strategic growth, habitat restoration, and infrastructure improvements, not to mention adding new faces and seeing the departure of a familiar face. Refuge visitors seized the opportunity to socially distance in the wide open spaces across the refuge which helped Ottawa set a new visitation record of 361,000 visits. The Refuge added more than 253 acres putting the refuge at 10,628 total acres conserved and growing. Refuge staff replaced aging infrastructure critical to long-term sustainable resource management, developed new parking areas aiding the opening of 247 acres of new public use areas, and restored more than 92 acres of trees and native grasses. Two new faces were added to the staff – Karl Fleming, Deputy Manager and Clayton Hamilton, Federal Wildlife Officer. Both were tremendous assets to the refuge as we coped and managed through this challenging year. Unfortunately, 2020 also saw the departure of Justin Woldt, Visitor Services Manager to the U.S. Forest Service. Justin's conservation legacy will be long lasting at Ottawa and will continue to have positive benefits for decades to come. He will be missed but not forgotten.

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home." – Gary Snyder



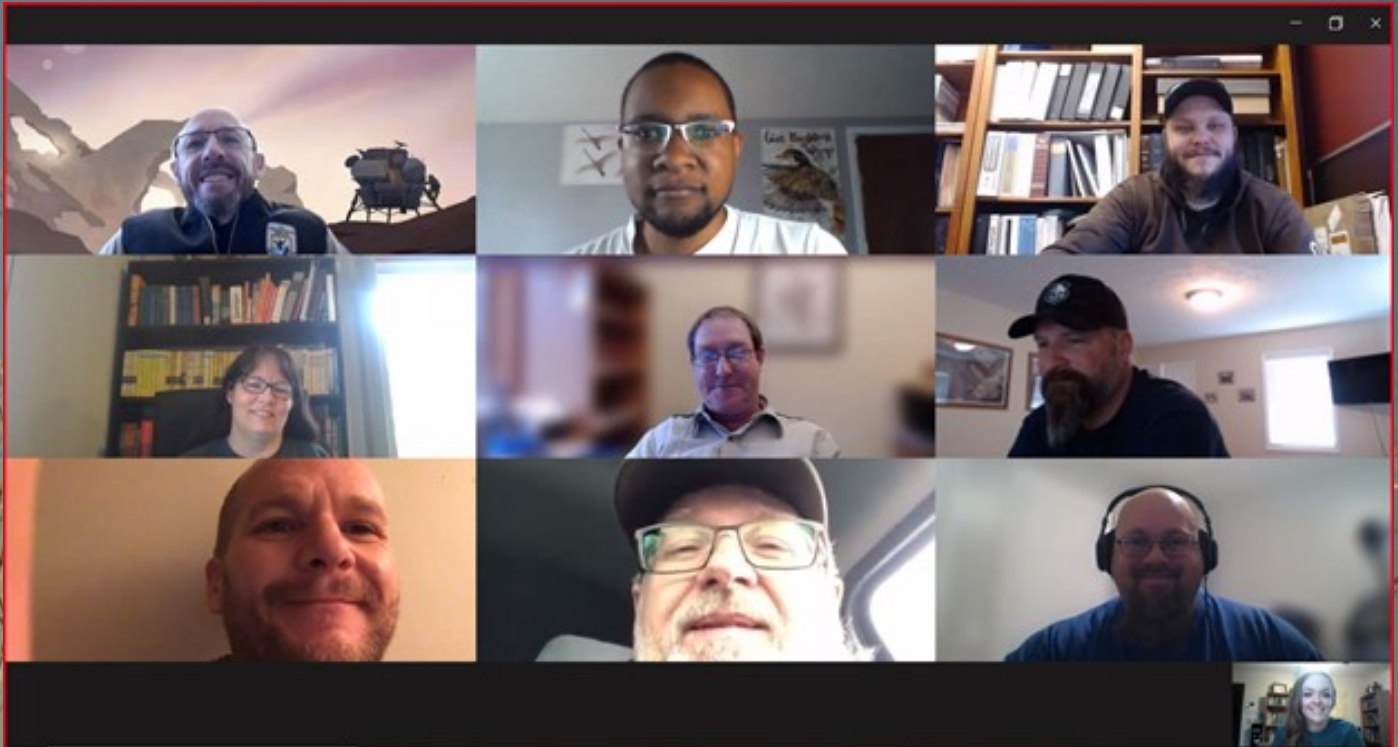
Jason P. Lewis

Refuge Manager

Ottawa became a home for many people looking for a place to find refuge and solace from the realities of 2020. The calming and relaxing powers of nature have a way of helping us to forget, if for a moment, all the worry and uncertainty encumbering our lives. National Wildlife Refuges are more than wildlife refuges, they provide tranquil opportunities to appreciate the healing powers of nature, especially when we need it the most. With Ottawa's record breaking visitation, the refuge became "home" to so many wanting to experience the healing powers of nature. I am so glad that in these dark times the refuge could be that place where the people we serve could find peace, tranquility, and a small ray of healing light amplified by the spectacular sights and sounds of nature.

I am looking forward to 2021 not just because of my desire to put 2020 in the rearview mirror. Every year is a new beginning presenting new opportunities to make impactful change to improve the health of our ecosystems, help connect people to the wonders of the natural world around us, and to stand true to our commitment at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge to be good public servants and natural resource stewards. **What better legacy could anyone hope for but to ensure the sunrise over a marsh for the next generation?**

I hope to see you all enjoying the refuge in 2021. I deeply appreciate your support of the refuge and everything you do to champion the conservation successes across Ohio and beyond. Best wishes for a wonderful New Year and thank you.



Teleworking at it's finest!

Staff meetings looked a little bit different in 2020, but the team continued to meet and plan conservation projects in a safe way. *Top row (left to right): Jason Lewis, Joshua Booker (Zone Biologist), Ramsay Houze. Middle row: Rebecca Lewis, Karl Fleming, Jeff Finn. Bottom row: Buck Buchanan, Ron Huffman, Scott Bryant. Bottom right: Aimee Arent (Friends Executive Director).*

REFUGE STAFF

Jason Lewis, *Refuge Manager*
Karl Fleming, *Assistant Refuge Manager*
Ron Huffman, *Refuge Biologist*
Jeff Finn, *Private Lands Biologist*
Justin Woldt, *Visitor Services Manager*
Rebecca Lewis, *Visitor Services Specialist*
Clayton Hamilton, *Federal Wildlife Officer*
Scott Bryant, *Administrative Assistant*
Chuck Shier, *Maintenance Mechanic*
Ramsay Houze, *Maintenance Worker*
Buck Buchanan, *Laborer*

Your National Wildlife Refuge



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

Ottawa NWR:

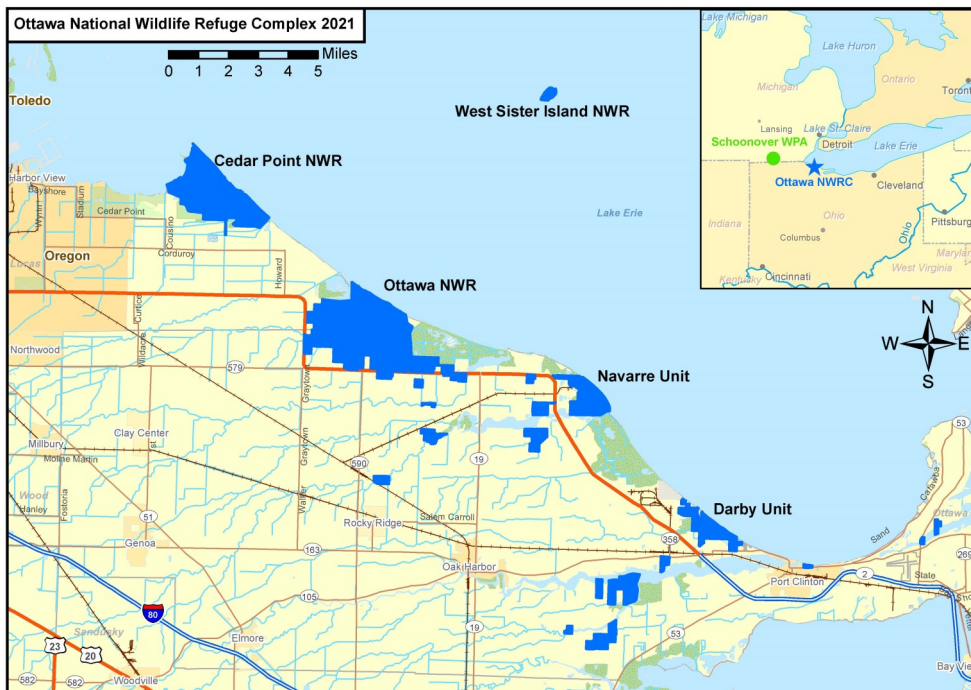
Located between Toledo and Port Clinton, this 7,930 acre refuge is managed for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrant songbirds, and a variety of plant and animal species. The three story Visitor Center and hiking trails are located here. A number of satellite properties are also part of this refuge.

Cedar Point NWR:

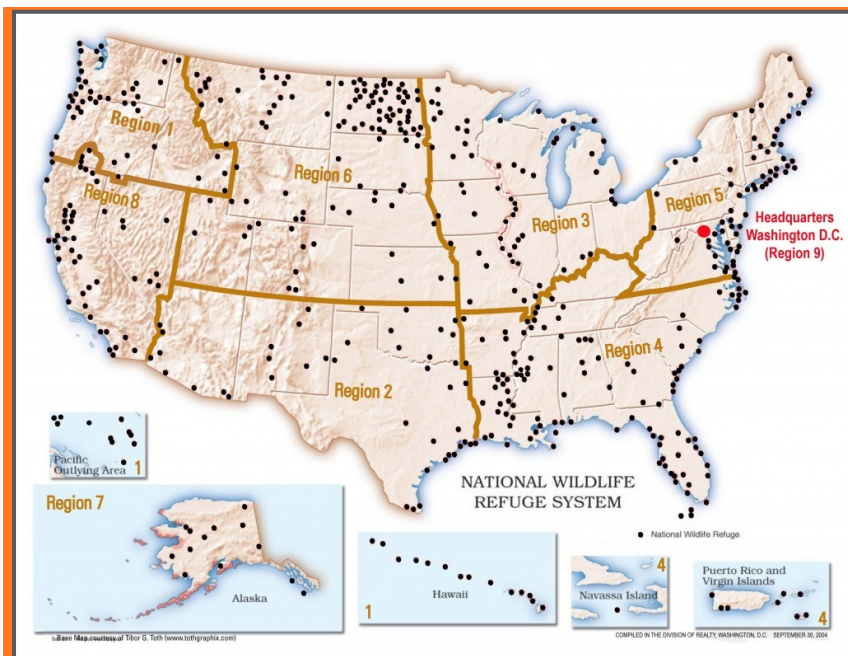
Cedar Point NWR's 2,616 acres comprise the largest contiguous marsh on Lake Erie (US). Aside from a designated fishing and kayaking area, access is by guided tour or permit only.

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.

Meet the Staff



New Assistant Refuge Manager

Hello there! I wanted to take this time to introduce myself. My name is Karl Fleming and I started working at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in May of 2020 filling the vacancy left when Eddy Pausch accepted a new position. I am extremely excited about the new refuge, area, and job duties.

My past work experience of 30 years had a primary focus on collaborative habitat restoration on private lands as well as management activities on various refuges and wetland management districts. In my career I have worked in Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota and Long Island New York. I believe that my past work experience will enable me to work with the refuge staff, Friend's group, and the other numerous partners here at Ottawa. The support and use that the refuge receives is amazing. I spent a lot of time this past summer and fall learning about the refuge and the lands it manages, opportunities for future work, and the great partnerships that are so important to the refuge. I was also able to help the staff with opening new areas for the public to utilize, providing information to the public so historic uses could continue to occur, and working on various habitat restoration activities on some areas owned and managed by the refuge.

I am originally from Michigan, and it is great to be back in this area. The move was a big change and I did not make the journey alone. My wife Sarah and our son Karson are also part of this new adventure. We like experiencing new activities and are looking forward to exploring Ohio and enjoying the numerous opportunities it has to offer. As I meet more of you please share your thoughts on what you like about Ottawa refuge, suggestions for improvements and your favorite things to do and see in the great state of Ohio.



Karl Fleming

Assistant Refuge Manager

Phone: 419-343-6793

Email: karl_fleming@fws.gov



Buck Buchanan

Laborer

A Day in the Life of Buck

My name is Christopher "Buck" Buchanan. I'm a Laborer at ONWR. I got my start at ONWR in April of 2017. I start my day as early as 3:45am in the Visitor Center during the week and arrive some time after daybreak most weekends. My day and responsibilities can vary by the season and the weather. Shoveling snow, cutting grass, painting, carpet cleaning, floor buffing, and pressure washing are just some of various activities I get the opportunity to participate in throughout the year. My primary focus daily however, is on ensuring that staff, volunteers, and visitors have a clean, safe environment in which to work and enjoy the refuge.



Ask me about The Rookery Nature Store!

Julia Hince grew up on the shores of Lake Erie in Western New York. It didn't take long after moving to Northwest Ohio to realize what a true treasure this area is. She is thrilled to be a part of the Friends group's efforts to preserve it. Working in public service and volunteering at the refuge has led her to this position. Julia's goal is to provide unique items in the Rookery Nature Store that showcase the distinct beauty of the refuge. She shares her love of nature with her husband and three children who enjoy amateur bird watching, fishing and camping together.

Julia can be reached at 419-898-0014 x13 or theonwr@gmail.com.



Julia Hince

Friends Nature Store Clerk

Friends Priorities



Established in 1997, the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge works to support conservation of the Lake Erie marshes at Ottawa Refuge.

Impact Areas

◆ LAND ACQUISITION

Since 2013 the Friends have managed a growing fund for Land Acquisition and Restoration. One of our long-term goals is to establish a \$500,000 revolving fund that will allow us to aid the refuge with the purchase of land from willing property owners and restoration of existing refuge parcels from Toledo to the Sandusky Bay. You can learn more about this program and our progress so far on the next page.

◆ YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Making sure that the next generation cares about conservation as much as we do is a priority for our group. Therefore Friends of Ottawa NWR provides life-changing career opportunities through living stipends for interns, and field trip grants to bring schools and classes to experience all that the refuge has to offer. With the Visitor Center closed in 2020, Environmental Education field trips were cancelled but we were able to host three interns.

◆ PUBLIC USE PROJECTS

Friends of Ottawa NWR is committed to helping the refuge improve access for its six public uses: Wildlife Observation, Environmental Education, Interpretation, Photography, Fishing and Hunting. We help to install access points with trails, observation decks, provide equipment to maintain these areas, and help to keep the public updated and connected with what's happening at the refuge.



Thank You.

We started 2020 with lots of plans for creative and engaging events at the refuge and in our community. The Chili Cookoff in February and Lorax Day the following weekend were the only two events that went as planned. With the Biggest Week in American Birding cancelled by our partners, we were concerned about how much support we would be able to offer the refuge this year. **We are grateful to our Friends who found new ways to support the Friends group as we transitioned to virtual events and those who donated their time and talents in ways that only a pandemic could invent to make it all possible.** From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

(Top left to bottom right: Chili Cookoff winners; Refuge Recycle Round-Up; TJ and Mary Held, winners of the Cardinal Quilt Raffle; Sharron Ferrell and Peggy Lewis (the Two Masked Birders who made masks for us to auction); Stacy Cupps-Alexander, winner of our Cardinal Raffle Basket; Crocheted owl hat that a member made for us to sell at 100% profits; the Blohm Family, winners of the Refuge Scavenger Hunt; Friends participating in the virtual 5K Walk/Run for the Refuge)



Contact Us

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OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
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419-898-0014 (office)

Facebook: @OttawaNWR

Adding Acres to Ottawa



As you know, in 2019 the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge completed their first two land acquisitions for the refuge. In 2020, we are happy to report that both parcels were sold to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Fox Unit (40 acres)

On April 10, 2020, the Fox Unit officially became part of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex when the Friends accepted an offer from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This parcel was planted with moist meadow and woodland edge seed (right) on June 19, 2020 by USFWS Bio Tech (and former Friends-sponsored intern), Owen Seggaard. In 2021, the reforestation project will begin on 10.8 acres near the existing woodlot.



The restoration work is financed in part by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency under provisions of the US EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.



In November, Refuge Manager Jason Lewis and Friends Executive Director Aimee Arent (left) met for a socially-distanced strategy session at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Fox Unit. Plans are in place to establish a parking area and hiking trail here in 2021.

The map to the left shows the planned trail at the Fox Unit. The parking area will be installed off of Lickert-Harder Rd near the refuge entrance. If you look closely, you can see the refuge entrance road at the top of the map.



Kontz Unit Addition (0.56 acres)

In October 2019, the Friends completed their second land purchase, a 0.56 acre parcel with the help of the Ellsworth and Jennifer Shriver family. The property is located next to the Ohio Division of Wildlife Turtle Creek Fishing Access on State Route 2 near State Route 19. This parcel became part of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge's Kontz Unit on July 20, 2020. It will be managed as a wetland by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Utilities were disconnected and the house (top photo) was removed in January 2020 by our Friends at Buehler Excavating.

This photo taken in July 2020 (right) shows how quickly the area is becoming a wetland. The fire hydrant is on the edge of the old driveway for reference.

The Friends group is currently investigating another parcel to purchase for the refuge and hopes to share more good news in 2021.



Interns: Leaders of Tomorrow



My name is Logan Sauer. I am from northern Virginia. I graduated from the University of Maine in 2019 with my Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Ecology and a Minor in Anthropology. Most of my experience has focused on scientific research and field studies but in the past year and a half I have developed a passion for Visitor Services, particularly on national wildlife refuges. So far, I have worked at Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex in northern Virginia, the Northern Maine National Wildlife Refuge Complex, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge!

How did you become interested in conservation?

I have always loved the outdoors and animals. I grew up watching Steve Irwin, his family, and the impact they had on wildlife and the world. From a young age I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). In high school I volunteered at my local animal shelter and then moved on to my first paying job which was at an animal hospital. The summer after high school I was hired at Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex as a Youth Conservation Corps crew member. That is where I first experienced the work done on national wildlife refuges. I absolutely loved the projects I was involved in and the crew I worked with. Fast forward to the present and I have chosen to exclusively work at national wildlife refuges.

What was your role at Ottawa NWR?

I was brought on to the team as the Visitor Services Intern in February of 2020. I was initially hired to conduct environmental education and interpretive programs, conduct tours, and staff the Visitor Center. But because of the pandemic, my internship didn't go as planned. Regardless, we switched gears and I was able to accomplish great things during my time here.



What were your top three favorite moments or accomplishments?

My favorite moment while being here was witnessing the release of three juvenile eagles back onto the refuge that were previously rescued and nursed back to health after their nest had been blown down. My two favorite accomplishments are the two videos that I created, one about the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program and the other is virtual painting session. You can find these videos on the official U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service YouTube page. Both videos brought a lot of attention towards Ottawa NWR, which is what I was hoping for! The ultimate goal of these videos was for other refuges to use these videos to further spread the word on the Junior Duck Stamp Contest and virtual painting program.



Logan Sauer

2020 Visitor Services Intern

"I am extremely grateful for the experience I have gained here at Ottawa NWR because without it, I don't think I would've competed well for my new position at Minnesota Valley NWR."

How did your internship prepare you for the future?

Since I want to pursue a career with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, particularly in the Visitor Services realm, this internship has prepared me immensely. Although it didn't go as planned, I was able to work with our Visitor Services Manager, Justin, and Visitor Services Specialist, Rebecca, to create projects that would make my internship meaningful and fulfilling. Thanks to them and the rest of the staff at Ottawa NWR, they have made me feel like an actual employee rather than your average intern. During my time here, my presence and network within USFWS has expanded more than I ever imagined.

What are your future plans/dream job?

I have recently accepted a permanent position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working as park ranger at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge just outside of Minneapolis! I am extremely grateful for the experience I have gained here at Ottawa NWR because without it, I don't think I would've competed well for the position. Now that I am in permanently I will spend a few years at Minnesota Valley NWR then work my way up and to new refuges across the nation!



Citizen Science



Our refuge volunteers are pleased to report that 10 eastern bluebird chicks successfully fledged nest boxes at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. There were three successful nests this year, two near the Visitor Center and one at Grimm Prairie.



Bluebirds



Three kestrel chicks successfully fledged from the box at Grimm Prairie. This photo shows a peek inside their nest box as volunteers checked the nest this spring.

American Kestrel



Tree swallows tend to be a common sight at the refuge, especially along the entrance road with nest boxes lining the way. 162 tree swallows fledged in 2020.

—Info on bluebirds, kestrels and swallows submitted by Mike, Dawn, and Trevor Zook

Tree Swallows

Maintenance Updates



Keeping up with Record Visitation

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge maintenance team consists of two permanent staff, Ramsay Houze and Chuck Shier who work closely with the Refuge Biology and Visitor Services teams to constantly improve the refuge for wildlife and people.

A few of their accomplishments for the year included:

- ◆ Built 3 new parking lots to provide public access
- ◆ Tiled overflow parking lot
- ◆ Repaired/replaced 10 waterman gates on 4 water control structures
- ◆ Completely replaced Visitor Center woods pump structure
- ◆ For the first time in many years achieved a draw down at Cedar Point by making a cut for water to flow to the pumps, creating better waterfowl habitat
- ◆ Demolished the barn at Two Rivers and restrooms at the Nehls Memorial Reserve
- ◆ Maintained Wildlife Drive and hiking trails all year for visitor use



Chuck Shier

Maintenance Mechanic

MAINTAINED
75 miles
OF ROADS, DIKES
& HIKING TRAILS

DROVE
4,516 miles
IN EQUIPMENT THAT
REQUIRES A CDL

LOGGED
 **830**
equipment hours

Water, Water Everywhere.



Challenges with Water Management

As you may know, water in the refuge marshes is managed through a series of dikes, culverts, and pumps with the ultimate goal of being able to manage water to provide habitat for Ottawa Refuge's flora and fauna. Water management was a nearly full time activity in March, April, and May to protect refuge infrastructure from damage, and to mitigate flooding issues. Nearly every electric and portable pump were in use most of the spring as Lake Erie set new record high water levels from February through May. COVID-19 restrictions meant that we did not have our normal seasonal interns, so a lack of boots on the ground to manage this situation made it particularly challenging. Lake Erie water levels were 1 - 4" below the 2019 record highs for June through September. For perspective, these levels were at or above the previous record highs set in 1986 for this time period. In 2021, Lake Erie water levels are forecast to remain high, but to be below record highs (we hope!).



Main Complex Moist Soil Pump Repairs

In the spring our maintenance staff finished extensive repairs in the Moist Soil Pump structure, by replacing all 5 control gates. This critical pump helps control water levels in the heart of Ottawa NWR, including 5 wetlands totaling over 700 acres.



Swans and ducks on MS5 during fall migration, USFWS



Above: Eagles and American White Pelicans use Cedar Point Pool 1 during the drawdown.

Below: Annual plant response to Cedar Point Pool 1 drawdown including millet, nutsedge, smartweed and beggars ticks, USFWS

Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge Pool 1 Drawdown

For the first time in 10 years, we were able to accomplish a drawdown of the 1,444-acre Pool 1 at Cedar Point NWR.

Wetland conditions had degraded over the years due to continued high water, as a result of lack of water management capabilities and high lake levels. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative-funded fish passage was used to remove high water from the marsh in the spring, and our maintenance staff worked to restore water access from the wetland to the pump to complete the drawdown. Electric pumping costs were in excess of \$9,000 to complete the drawdown. The unit had good use by shorebirds during the drawdown, and excellent annual plant food responses in many areas of the unit. We re-flooded the unit in the fall,



with excellent waterfowl use during fall migration. For the fall migration September-December, there were over 890,000 waterfowl use days at Cedar Point NWR.



Cottonwood Dune Community Erosion

One of the consequences of record high lake levels is the continued erosion of the globally imperiled Cottonwood Dune community at Cedar Point NWR. While it is difficult to view this short term loss of trees (left), this is a naturally occurring disturbance mechanism for this community and will result in long term regeneration of the stand as lake levels decline.

Restoration Projects



Restoration and Enhancement Projects at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Ottawa NWR and Ducks Unlimited completed four restoration projects in 2020. These projects were funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

- ◆ **Buehler:** 38-acre property is located on Benton-Carroll Road, adjacent to the Kontz tract. This agricultural field is being restored to a forest community. During 2020, all restoration plantings were completed. Plantings included a woodland edge ground cover mix, 372 container trees, and 14,800 bare root seedlings. Due to drought during the summer, high mortality in the bare root trees occurred, and additional trees will be planted in 2021.
- ◆ **Genzman:** 37-acre tract located south of the Ottawa NWR entrance. The elevations on this property indicate it was located in the transition zone from coastal emergent wetland to the Great Black Swamp. As such, it would have had a dynamic plant community that changed in response to rising and falling Lake Erie water levels. Planting zones were defined along elevation contours to mimic the interface between coastal marshes and forests. Planting zones consist of 3 zones, wet sedge meadow, lake plain prairie, and a savannah like prairie/shrub/tree community. 100 container trees were also planted in the savannah zone.
- ◆ **Weber:** 50-acre tract located south of the Toussaint River, and next to the Blausey tract. Historically, this location would have been coastal riverine marsh during high lake level cycles. However, the current county drainage ditch impedes a direct reconnection to the river. We installed a water control structure from the wetland basin to the county drainage ditch to capture and treat farm runoff during high flow storm events. A supplemental well was also installed to provide water during drier periods. Ground cover mixes of native low sedge meadow and short grass prairie were planted in shallow wetland areas and along wetland edges. In fall 2019, 100 container trees were planted on the property (right).
- ◆ **Schiller:** located along the floodplain of Toussaint Creek between Rocky Ridge Rd and Lickert-Harder Rd (right). The restoration goals on this property are to remove a small 1 acre diked pond constructed in the floodplain, and to restore native ground cover and forest communities along the river. 24.9 acres of ground cover were planted with an Ohio floodplain native seed mix. In fall of 2019, this area was planted with 1,578 container trees. In the 19.6 acre upland area of the property, ground cover planting of a woodland edge seed mix, along with 6,493 bare root tree seedlings were completed. Due to drought during the summer, high mortality in the bare root trees occurred. Additional trees will be planted in spring 2021.



Ron Huffman

Refuge Biologist



Future Plans

The state of Ohio is funding several wetland enhancement projects throughout Ottawa NWR Complex through H2Ohio grants. These projects are focused on improving water quality and fish access through improved connections between coastal wetlands and Lake Erie and its tributaries. The grant was awarded to Ottawa Soil and Water Conservation District, and during 2020 we worked cooperatively on engineering and design of the connections. Construction is planned to begin in early 2021. New and improved connections will be installed on Ottawa at HU 6, Pool 3, and MS 5, and at Darby on Pool 1 and Pool 4.

Additional work in the planning, permitting, and design phases were completed for GLRI restoration and enhancement projects at Navarre Marsh (790 acres, Ducks Unlimited, H2Ohio, Ohio DOW, Energy Harbor), Cedar Point Pool 2 (156 acres, John Gradel & Sons Farms), and Fox (40 acres, FONWR).

The Navarre Marsh project will reconnect Pools 2 and 3 to the Toussaint River and Lake Erie hydrology by a fish passage structure, which will provide fish access to the marshes, and water quality benefits by wetland filtration. In addition, it will restore water management capabilities to the three wetland units by replacing three pump structures.

The Cedar Point Pool 2 project will provide independent water supply and a direct connection to Lake Erie hydrology for the first time in over 20 years. A new pump station and fish passage will be installed in Pool 2 that will greatly increase management options and provide fish access to the wetland. In addition, a pump station will be installed to divert 200 acres of farm runoff into Pool 2 for wetland filtration, greatly increasing water quality benefits of the project.

From the Refuge Admin



My name is Scott Bryant, and I am the Administrative Officer for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. My role is to assist with balancing the budget, process payroll, order supplies, keep the lights on, and anything else the refuge manager needs me to do.

Congress appropriated \$1.32 million to Ottawa NWR in fiscal year 2020. We also received "special funding" (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant money, flood repair money, carry-over accounts, cooperative agreements, special event funding) in the amount of \$1 million, the bulk of which is earmarked for one project, the Cedar Point NWR repairs and habitat restoration. I want to discuss the appropriated funds, as these are the funds that allow us to run our day to day operations. Special funds are earmarked for very specific purposes, and in most cases, can't be used for most daily functions.



Scott Bryant

Administrative Assistant

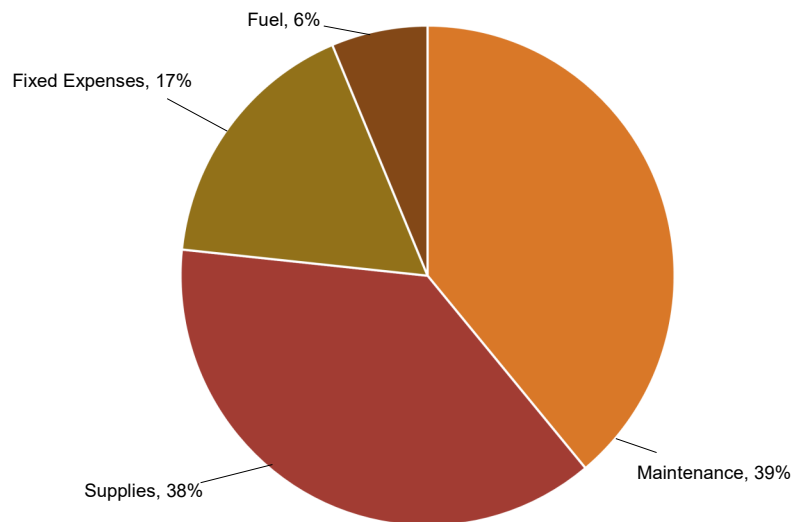
The maintenance funds go to the highest priority repairs as we only have a small percentage of funding to use. Fortunately, we were able to use some special funding provided by the regional office to offset some of these repairs and modifications. Other maintenance repair projects are earmarked out of special funds.

Our largest utilities expenditure is electricity. Most of our water control pump structures are electrically operated. 62% of our total electricity usage was spent on water management alone. As most of you know, we have a solar array on our property. This wonderful addition supplies 2/3 of our electricity needs for the Visitor Center. The solar array is now back online, and we are actively pushing some energy back to the "grid" giving us some savings on this electric bill.

This year has been especially challenging to the refuge staff. We've been able to perform the most necessary maintenance work, all while keeping safe. We were able to implement changes that would keep our visitors safe. We know that some of our changes have been an inconvenience. We can only extend our sincerest thanks with the patience that you have had during this trying year.



The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex had an operating budget of \$365,484 for 2020.



Here is the breakdown of the expenditures for 2020:

- **Maintenance:** \$142,412, including repairs to properties, structures, vehicles, and equipment
- **Supplies:** \$137,810, including office and field supplies, visitor/volunteer services supplies for all programs
- **Fixed Expenses:** \$62,223, including utilities, phones, water, propane, trash removal, etc.
- **Fuel:** \$23,039 to fuel vehicles and equipment for all programs

Friends Financials



2020 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 2020, support of Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge through all revenue streams totaled \$195,803.

Because we purchased items to sell during spring migration before we closed in March, we ended the year with \$55,461 worth of inventory—much more than normal. Most of the difference between our expenses and revenue is not really a loss, just the cost of goods instead of cash. Our balance sheet shows that we ended the year at a loss of \$7,091.

A total of \$103,885 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 visitor access and maintenance projects, intern stipends, and field trip transportation.

This year specifically, funds secured by the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge accomplished the following:

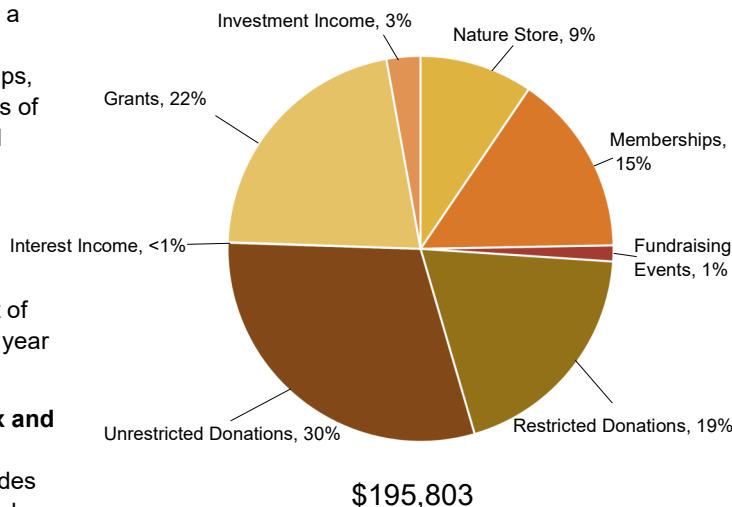
- ◆ Built new pull-offs and interpretive signs on the Wildlife Drive
- ◆ Purchased a tractor for volunteers to maintain the dike trails
- ◆ Funded three interns who worked a combined total of 2,680 hours
- ◆ Purchased new signs for 5 existing kiosks and built 2 new kiosks
- ◆ Installed an ADA accessible parking space and sidewalk to the observation deck at West Harbor Landing (pictured below)
- ◆ Provided lawn and garden maintenance at West Harbor Landing
- ◆ Prepped and seeded 29.5 acres of native plants to establish new habitats the Fox Unit



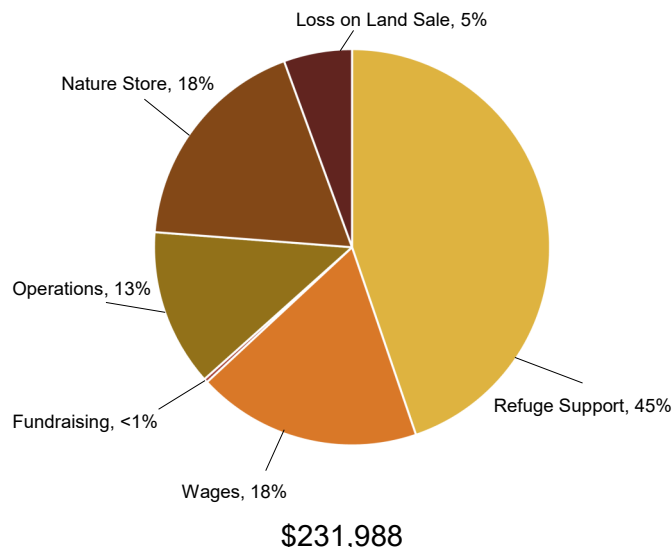
A combination of restricted donations and grants made this possible. Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals for helping us to make a difference for Ottawa Refuge:

- Ohio EPA (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) ~ Fox Unit Restoration
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation ~ ADA Fishing Access
- Anonymous Donor ~ Funded the Entire 2020 Intern Program
- 2019 Wildlife Drive Improvement Fund Donors
- 2019 Tractor Fund Donors
- FONWR Members

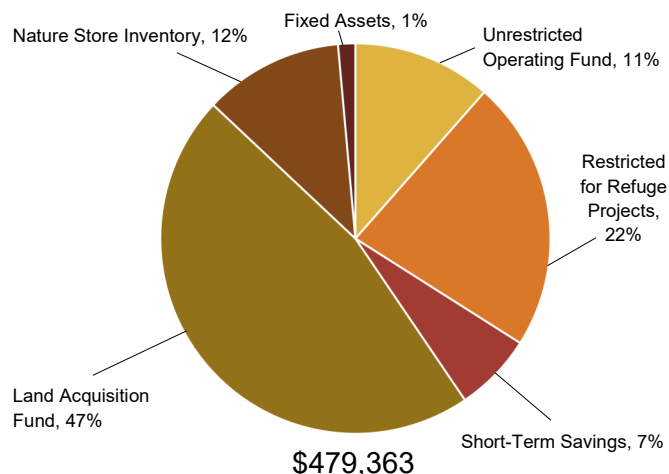
2020 FRIENDS REVENUE



2020 FRIENDS EXPENSES



2020 FRIENDS ASSETS





2020...

A YEAR OF

Adaptations

As visits to natural areas skyrocketed as people looked for safe recreation options during COVID-19 restrictions, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge saw record visitation once again.

360,303 *visits*

TO OTTAWA REFUGE



an increase of

90.1%

over 2015



“Being a single mother of an autistic adult that loves animals... Him with his field glasses and I with my camera, set out to find a peaceful sanctuary from the tough times of 2020. We found it on the ONWR Wildlife Drive.”



*—Shelley Bennett,
2020 Photo Contest Best of Show Winner*



Be sure to join the **“Friends of Ottawa NWR Photo Club”** group on Facebook. We have all skill levels from amateur to professional. This incredible group is very helpful in directing you to their favorite spots to see wildlife. Seeing the refuge through their eyes helped to keep us all connected during the pandemic.

Conservation Corner



Junior Ranger Mallory Speaks for the Monarchs

The world is in the hands of the next generation. Hear from 12-year-old Mallory about what you can do to support the conservation of the Monarch butterfly.

“My name is Mallory Meggitt. I am 12 years old, and I live in Lindsey, Ohio. I like to play sports, ride my bike, and swim. Ever since I went to nature camp at Creek Bend Farm, I have been fascinated with nature, especially butterflies. When outside I enjoy looking on my milkweed for little monarch caterpillars, but I haven’t seen many due to their decreasing population. The monarch’s population is declining because of the use of pesticides and habitat loss. Milkweed plays a major role in a monarch’s life cycle. It is the only plant the female lays her eggs on.

For my birthday, I adopted a monarch from ONWR. I was able to name my butterfly, Susan, which was named after one of the butterfly’s favorite flowers, the Black-Eyed Susan. The butterfly was tagged, so if someone spotted it on their journey to Mexico, they could enter it in Monarch Watch. Each fall, the monarchs go on their long migration. It takes them about two months and 3,000 miles to get to Mexico.

I help monarchs with my butterfly garden. You can create your own by planting flowers like aster, goldenrod, zinnias, and a butterfly bush. You also need a large rock so in the cool mornings the sun will heat it up and butterflies will bask on it. Make sure to have milkweed! Once butterflies begin to come to your garden, you will enjoy them as much as I do.”



Mallory Meggitt

Junior Ranger

Adopt a Monarch Program

For the first time in 2020, Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge offered the *Adopt a Monarch* Program as part of our fall monarch tagging program. Since people couldn’t come to the Visitor Center to see the monarchs being tagged and released, this allowed the Friends to raise awareness online by creating personalized tag and release videos for adopters. We had a lot of fun doing this, and it was a great break from the stressors of the world.

As Mallory said, monarchs migrate a long distance to get to their over-wintering site in Mexico. We participate in a large-scale citizen science project to help understand the dynamics of the monarch’s spectacular fall migration through mark and recapture. Starting in late August and early September, the Friends tag wild-caught adults and reared monarchs (eggs or caterpillars that we find in the pollinator garden and raise to adult butterflies). In 2020, we tagged 200 monarchs: 100 reared and 100 wild-caught migrating adults that were roosting on a wooded property near Graytown, Ohio.

Our 2020 tag numbers are ABWN 875-974 and ACNS 600-699. We tagged 88 females and 112 males. Watch the tag recoveries on www.monarchwatch.org to see if ours are found in Mexico.



Visitor Services



As I sat down to write about the past year, I tried to take a positive approach as there were many good things that happened. But to do that, you also need to acknowledge that it was a hard year. So many losses, so much heartbreak, fear and loneliness. I hope that each of you can find the positives, some peace, and that we can look toward this next year with anticipation of new ideas and plans.

One of the best things about this year was how many people sought nature to stay active, to spend time outside of their homes and to interact in a safe manner. So many people did this that we had record high visitation in 2020. Over 360,000 visitors came out to enjoy the hiking trails, the Wildlife Drive and the nature that they can explore there. Many people discovered the Wildlife Drive for the first time, over 56,000 of you ventured out to explore the refuge in the comfort of your vehicle.

I want to thank everyone who shared their discoveries and joy of exploration with us, whether you knew you were doing it or not. As we made the switch over to digital outreach and communication we missed the interaction with our visitors. Whether it is the sharing of a bird you have never seen before, discovering an interesting nature fact, or just letting the calming effects of nature soothe you, we take joy in seeing that every day at work. And though we could not see it in person, we saw you. You posted your photos on social media, shared information with your network, sent us messages and asked us questions. New visitors often ask similar questions, and I love to answer them. **This isn't just the thousandth time I have answered this question, this is the thousandth person I have been lucky enough to introduce to Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.** So please, keep those posts, comments, and questions coming.



Rebecca Lewis
Visitor Services Specialist

A highlight of every year is our staff and volunteers. This year was no different. We started strong with amazing volunteers and we can't wait to have them back at work soon. February brought us our first, and only, Visitor Services intern of the year. Logan Sauer was instrumental in much of the work that was done this year. He took on every challenge that was handed to him and we couldn't have been happier with his work. If you have not joined him for a painting session via video please look for that. As with every intern they leave us eventually, but we were thrilled that Logan didn't leave us completely as he moved on to a permanent position with the USFWS.



The end of the year brought more change in staff as Justin Woldt, Visitor Services Manager (left), took an exciting new position with the U.S. Forest Service. I know how much he enjoys new challenges and know he will enjoy this new step in his career. I also know that he will continue to support this refuge in his future endeavors. His leaving is bringing some new opportunities for me, as I get to work more closely with the Friends of Ottawa NWR. I am excited about all of the changes that this next year will bring, new interns, new staff, and best of all new and old visitors and supporters of this refuge.

I will end this with a story that fits the emotional roller coaster of 2020. There was a severe thunderstorm the night of June 10 with measured wind gusts of 75 mph. On the afternoon of June 11th I received a call from Ramsay that our Pool 9 eagle nest was down. Only two of the three chicks were visible. Everyone (some even in sock feet) came together with pet carriers, a boat, nets, blankets, and transport to the rehab facility to give these chicks a chance. Because of volunteer Becky Traxler (below left, red shirt) monitoring the nest we knew the age. This info is extra important if they are going to be placed in a foster nest. For many reasons, this was not possible. The maintenance staff Chuck Shier and Ramsay Houze brought carriers and equipment, and Ramsay (below, right) helped to catch the chicks. Refuge Officer Clayton Hamilton brought the boat and assisted in catching the chicks. Becky and I held our breath as they searched for that third chick. A Wildlife Officer arrived to transport the three chicks to Back to the Wild. On August 30th the eagles were released back onto the refuge near the site of their fallen nest, another successful team effort.



Pool 9 Nest by Eric Robinson



Partners for Fish and Wildlife



The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is the USFWS program that assists private landowners with habitat restoration projects. **2020 was an unfortunate year in so many ways, but amongst all the chaos and uncertainty, we were still able to make a difference on the landscape.** We were able to restore over 420 acres of wetland habitat, most of which was completed in Ottawa and Sandusky Counties. Although our normal funding sources have gradually been decreasing, we've been able to partner with other organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Ottawa County Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA, and Ohio Division of Wildlife to leverage \$336,500 from outside sources. The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act has provided our partnership with crucial funding that allows us to continue restoring habitat in strategic locations.

We completed several 'unusual' projects this past year. **As part of the effort to increase the health of Lake Erie, we have completed two projects that collect all the subsurface drainage from adjacent crop fields and then pump the runoff into the newly restored wetlands, where it can be filtered before it enters our watershed.** This is a win for the farmer by increasing yields on the remaining crop land and a win for our watershed by restoring wetlands and improving water quality. We're hoping to see more of this collaborative type of project happen in the near future.



One of our restoration projects this year is immediately to the west of the refuge. This is a picture of the area during the restoration process. The trees in the background are on Ottawa NWR. We restored 40 acres of wetland habitat on this property with the help of the landowner.



Jeff Finn

Private Lands Biologist

We worked alongside this skiddeon on the North Complex fire. The skiddeon operator brought his puppy to the fire line one day. Not the safest place for a puppy! The other firefighters pictured are from the U.S. Forest Service stationed at Wayne National Forest.



As the Private Lands Biologist, I assist with a wide array of activities both on and off refuge. I assisted with a prescribed fire class in Texas for NRCS/USDA employees in March and also helped teach a week-long chainsaw operation course for the Ohio Division of Forestry. **Wildfires did not seem to care that we had an ongoing global pandemic. Several states had a record wildfire year. I was fortunate enough to have two trips to Northern California to help out with the wildfires out there, once as part of a fire suppression module, and once as the Engine Boss trainee on a type 6 fire engine.** It always feels good to do what you can to help, especially in a year such as 2020.

The Record-Breaking Deer



Continuing the trend of 2020 being an odd one, Michael LaLonde Jr. of Oak Harbor, Ohio had quite a season hunting Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. In mid-September, he moved his ladder stand to prepare for archery season in a new location in the refuge after spotting a “buck” with atypical antlers in velvet. He had first seen the “buck” when he hunted the 180-acre tract of land when the area was opened up to public hunting in 2019. After a short morning in his stand on October 2, 2020 LaLonde took the shot he had been waiting for.

This very interesting deer not only has very unusual antlers, it is a doe which do not normally have antlers at all.

“When I approached the deer, I was in complete amazement! A full set of antlers in full velvet! After sending a picture to several friends, one friend replied and asked me if it was a male or female?! After checking, it was indeed, a female.” — Michael LaLonde Jr.

Antlers can grow when a female deer has a lot of testosterone. When does grow antlers, they will stay soft and in velvet year round.

LaLonde’s velvet-racked doe has 22 scorable points—15 points on the right side and seven on the left. The rack scores 191 0/8 inches making it the largest velvet-antlered doe in Buckmaster’s Whitetail Records, a world record.

According to Michael Tonkovich, Ohio’s deer biologist, velvet-antlered does are a rarity most of the time but this year, three of these incredible whitetails were taken by hunters in the state.

“It’s been a crazy year for Ohio deer in 2020,” says Tonkovich. “I’ve been at this job for 26-years and maybe get one report of an antlered doe every other year, but this year we had three.”



Antlered doe taken October 2, 2020, photo courtesy of Michael LaLonde Jr.

Seek Refuge with Us...



We asked some Friends why they support Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Here's what they said!



"I love the diversity of wildlife. It's more than I ever expected when I first started visiting the refuge. Rarely do I ever miss a weekend. My dogs and I, and sometimes my wife, spend five or six hours here every weekend.

This COVID year has been interesting. Many activities that I enjoy have been affected, fortunately the walking trails remained open. Visiting the refuge weekly reveals the subtle changes that go on. Once in awhile there's a surprise that only makes you want to come back. I can't really say what my favorite time of year is, every season has something to see."

—Jeffrey Vogelpohl, Elmore, Ohio

Photo: Jeff's dogs Jackson and Dreyfus



"I have trouble walking and love the nature drive! It's wonderful to be immersed in nature! Thank you for all you do!"

—Jeannette Gleba, Fremont, Ohio

" '2020 was the best year!' - I bet you won't hear many say something like that this year but for me 2020 has been the best year to get into a new hobby - birding. ONWR played a key role in turning this past year around for my family. I introduced ONWR to quite a few other friends and their families who have been frequent visitors this past year. For me to see and photograph 175 (and counting) species of birds with most of them at ONWR as a first-year birder is just an icing on the cake.

When everything was closed, my family discovered ONWR having a Wildlife Drive where one can connect with nature without getting out of the car. My kids who had been hunkered down at home and completely bored, accompanied me one evening late in June on a trip to ONWR. Within 5 minutes of being at ONWR, I could see it on their faces... the joy and happiness that nature brings - bald eagles flying over, egrets and blue herons fishing, and deer crossing the creek were things they thought were to be seen on TV documentaries. Seeing the beauty of wildlife this close to home and having a world-class national refuge system within driving distance was just an ecstatic feeling for all of us. I will never forget the joy and glee that I saw in my kids' eyes that day.

For this, I am thankful to all of the staff, volunteers and supporters of ONWR who make this possible each day for thousands of us to come enjoy and connect with nature. THANK YOU from the Singh Family."

—Tajinder Singh, Sylvania, Ohio

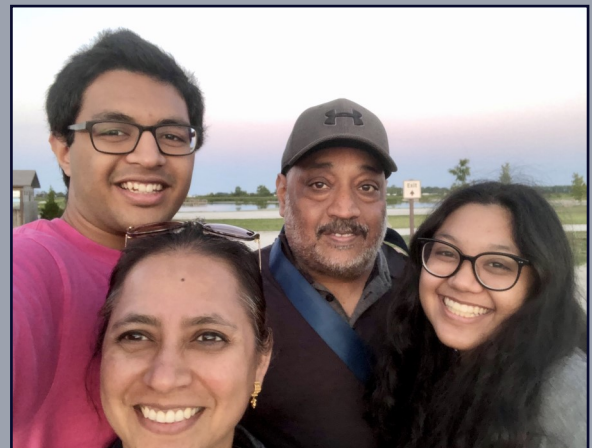


Photo: The Singh Family exploring the refuge.

"It was Kenn Kaufman's book *"A Season on the Wind"* that first led me to the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. After years living in Southeastern Michigan and Central Kentucky, I had no idea how important this region was to avian migration until I learned about the refuge from friends in several birding groups. Kenn's book was recommended to me and after reading it several times, I planned a visit during my next trip to Kentucky. That day in early June, I saw my first Black-and-white Warbler while walking on the nearly-deserted boardwalk.

Living in Wyoming opens the door for many wonderful days birding in the mountains and on the short-grass prairies. Our region also has many important birding areas and National Wildlife Refuge visits are a priority for me when I travel. But given my strong ties to the Midwest, and my newly acquired understanding of spring migration, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge will remain high on my list to both visit and to support." —Lorie Chesnut, Cheyenne, Wyoming



Photo: Lorie at Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge

Notes from our Friends



“Over the past few years, my husband and I cherished our time alone at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Winter and sunset were some of our favorite peaceful times. I’m remembering a visit on the drive in December, 22 degrees, leaving the car and braving the cold to photograph ice sculpted on frozen foliage. With few visitors on that day, we enjoyed the silence, peace, and isolation, watching nature and wildlife survive despite the season. Remembering American Pelicans, and thousands of swans finding their true refuge.

Now during the pandemic, when the entire world has changed, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge became OUR refuge. Missing connectedness with family and friends, experiencing loss of job, loss of usual daily routine, a general loss of any kind of normalcy, and having an overload of isolation, the refuge became something new for us. As I stated once in a refuge survey, ONWR became ‘a piece of quiet normalcy’. When we’re there, we get a feeling of being connected to life again. Observing the birds and animals, where for them nothing has changed, gives meaning to us beyond measure. It gives us comfort and hope, that in some places, things still are as they should be. We can walk and feel safe, and have respite from the world’s craziness like all living creatures at the refuge.”

— Jan Bohmler, Oregon, Ohio



Photo: Jan Bohmler at Ottawa Refuge



Here’s a word cloud showing what other Friends said they love about Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you all for enjoying the refuge responsibly and helping us to keep our habitats clean and healthy for wildlife and birds like me!

—Puddles the Blue Goose
Refuge System Mascot



“The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge was our light of hope during a rough year. We LOVE the driving trail! We went often...sometimes 3 times a week...to check on our eagle friends and see what else we could discover. My children, ages 10 and 12, would keep track of all the baby animals we could find and we always had an eagle count too. It was so beautiful to see my children light up as we counted 20+ turtles basking in the sun and watched the baby eagles in the two back nests grow. We have learned about sandhill cranes and have enjoyed seeing 2 snapping turtles as well. We loved to search for a few specific banded swans and watch their babies grow. We consider ourselves very lucky to have such a beautiful refuge within 25 minutes of our house. We look forward to a spring of searching out eagle nests and a summer of watching baby eagles grow. Thank you for all that you do to preserve our beautiful land. “

—Sharon Pesci, Rossford, Ohio

Thank you for your support in 2020!



COVID RELIEF

Tony & Jill Adams
Mary Ahwesh
Laura Alldridge
Wanda Apgar
Elden Apling
Ernie Ayers
Paul J Baicich
Rebekah Barkowitz
Connie Barron
Nancy Barry
Nelson & Shannon Bash
Johanna Beebe
Jean Belle
Ellen Bellemore
Barbara Berg
Carol Bersticker
Holly Brawley
Lee Anne Briese
Sally Brionez
Mindi Brown
Cheryl Brown
Carl and Laraine
Bryczynski
Joan Buechele
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Martha & Don Burrows
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Barb Clemons
Doug & Cassandra
Collar
Sally Collins
Robert Coy
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Rose Detlef
Kimberly Diefenthaler
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Sandra Drabik Collins
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Mary Dresbach
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Edwards
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National Fish & Wildlife
Foundation
Union Sportsmen's
Alliance

WEST HARBOR LANDING

Lou McLove
National Fish & Wildlife
Foundation

FOX UNIT RESTORATION

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Ohio EPA

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A Year of Gratitude



Dearest Friends,

Now that you've read through the report, I hope that you are sensing a theme... Gratitude.

2020 was a year for the record books as we closed the Visitor Center in mid-March and began to telework. Staff and board meetings became virtual, programs and events were cancelled, our store transitioned to our website, and *we did our very best to focus on the positive things that life had to offer*. And every single day, there you were.

- ◆ To the people who gave for the first time ever or the first time in awhile, who shared their stimulus check with us, renewed their membership or found a way to volunteer — thank you.
- ◆ To the people who walked the refuge trails multiple times a week to escape and donned a mask when they were near other visitors — thank you.
- ◆ To the families who came in separate vehicles, each with their phones on speaker, to experience the Wildlife Drive “together” — thank you.
- ◆ To the fishermen who took the extra time to clean up trash left behind by others to keep it out of the ecosystem — thank you.
- ◆ To the photographers who captured incredible moments with their cameras and allowed us to share to keep those who couldn't travel connected — thank you.
- ◆ To the lady who came and just sat on the bench by the pollinator garden for hours soaking in the fall air — thank you.



We saw you, and seeing how much you needed the refuge gave us the energy to keep going.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge means so much to each of us. For some it is a place to recreate, for others it is a place of healing. It belongs to us all. We invite you to experience everything that Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge has to offer as we heal from the pandemic together through nature. Thank you for helping us to stay positive.



Stay safe and Seek Refuge with us.

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.” — John Muir

Aimee Arent
Friends Executive Director

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NATIONAL Wildlife Refuge ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1975, the Refuge Association's mission is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect and enhance the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.

The Refuge Association works to build a strong constituency for wildlife, gives wildlife a voice on Capitol Hill, and protects the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

NWRA's leadership has resulted in an incredible impact on the Refuge System, including a \$26 million increase for Refuge System funding for FY2020.

www.refugeassociation.org



THE ROOKERY

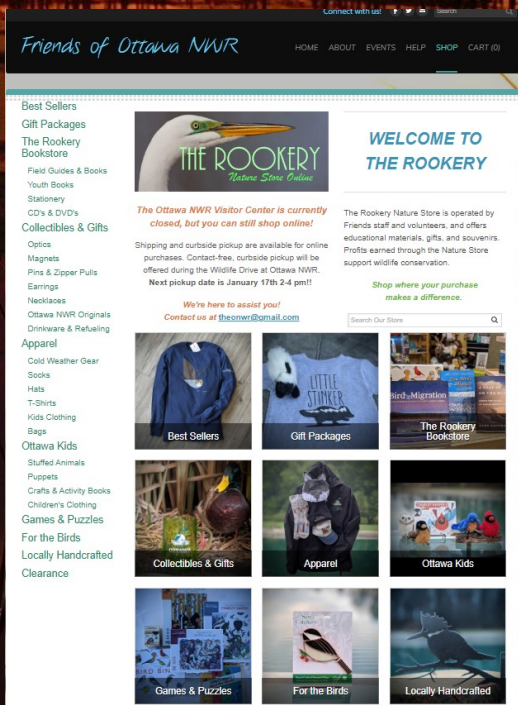
Nature Store Online

The Rookery Nature Store was dark and quiet for most of this past year, starkly different than the atmosphere in years past. We missed seeing crowds of enthusiastic birders during bird week and visitors stopping in daily sharing their excitement from their time at the refuge.

Sales from the Rookery Nature Store fund projects for wildlife conservation at Ohio's only national wildlife refuge complex. Last year our store sales soared into the six figures, while this year we only brought in 15% of that. Even though we were closed, it didn't slow down our effort to get your favorite nature themed products to you.

We put our store online!

Just about everything found in store is now available to ship directly to you, or for curbside pickup at the Visitor Center on select dates. You can still shop for meaningful gifts and great educational materials, knowing your money is being put to work at Ottawa NWR. Thank you to everyone who has already ordered from us! If you haven't checked out the Rookery Nature Store Online yet, be sure to shop with us, virtually, until we can see you in person again soon. Thank you for continuing to support Ottawa Refuge! (Scan the QR code to Shop Now!)



Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
14000 W State Route 2 Oak Harbor, OH 43449

www.friendsofottawanwr.org