

## News in Brief

### Aquatic Invertebrate Monitoring

The completed springs protocol awaits publication. The small streams protocol and contaminant metals (USGS) protocols have completed peer-review. Staff analyzed invertebrate and habitat data for rivers (FY 05-06), springs (FY 06), and small streams (FY 05-07) and reports are in progress. Sample processing and data entry continues.

### Bird Monitoring

Bird monitoring is in full swing at four parks this year. The Univ. of Nebraska will survey birds in two additional parks. Volunteer birders will survey in at least two more parks. A birding guide and bird key for volunteers went out to parks in April. Staff revised the bird monitoring protocol to incorporate expanded bird monitoring using volunteers and the University. The revision is in review.

### Data Management

Staff continues helping program ecologists to complete monitoring protocols for birds, small stream invertebrates and small stream fish communities. Staff GIS specialist, Jennifer Haack, moved her office to Missouri State University, allowing us to provide more support to staff on campus.

### Fish Community Monitoring

We have completed the draft protocol for small stream fish monitoring and peer-review has begun. Staff are working on annual fish reports for network parks and will distribute finished reports this summer. Fish sampling at BUFF will begin in mid-May, and the first year of monitoring at EFMO and HEHO will commence in early July.

### Invasive Plant Monitoring

A contract for invasive plant monitoring at HOCU in FY 2008 was awarded to Davey Tree Company.

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## HTLN Expands Bird Monitoring with Volunteers

Parkland within HTLN provides incredible birding opportunities. Managers preserve unique habitats, well suited for avian species conservation and vital to many species survival. Partners In Flight identified at least nine physiographic areas within HTLN parks during a bird conservation effort that included government agencies, professional/private groups, industry and academia.



Physiographic areas include five grassland types, two mountain/valley types, an interior plateau, and bottomland hardwoods. Partners in Flight lists 29 different avian species in need of conservation that breed in one or more of these physiographic areas. They list species in need of conservation because of low population numbers and/or threats to the unique habitat a species requires.

Starting this spring, park based monitoring by NPS staff and interested birders will supplement breeding bird monitoring of HTLN staff. Park staff and volunteers will take to the field in years when HTLN staff is monitoring in other parks. HTLN staff cannot physically be at all 771 plots across eleven network parks in the short

six to eight week survey window. However, through the joint efforts of park staff, volunteers, and HTLN, plots will be visited annually. The standard protocol becomes key to successful monitoring in the eight network parks starting this year and the remaining parks joining the effort in 2009.

While the HTLN benefits from a joint monitoring approach, park staff and volunteers benefit as well. Increased bird monitoring, augments assessment capabilities for management actions relative to impacts on bird populations.

Volunteer hours logged by parks increase by including the time of this skilled and dedicated workforce. Volunteers benefit by being afforded access to areas on parks that they may not normally visit, thus increasing opportunities to enjoy the rich bird communities that our many parks offer. Through their efforts, park staff and volunteers have joined the larger bird conservation effort underway across North America.

— David Peitz

## Something New!

HTLN has acquired a server to be housed at MSU. The server will be dedicated to managing network documents, databases and GIS data including remote sensing/orthophoto archives for land-use change analysis.

*The Weather Vane* is published by the Heartland Network Inventory and Monitoring Program of the National Park Service. Visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

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of our heritage



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### Rare Plant Monitoring

Staff completed Missouri bladderpod monitoring and vegetation mapping at Bloody Hill Glade, WICR.

### Vegetation Monitoring

HTLN staff installed six new vegetation monitoring sites in restored prairies at WICR. These new sites along with previously established sites will be sampled at the end of May. Staff recently completed sampling of all core sites at TAPR. Additional plant community monitoring is planned for GWCA, AGFO and SCBL.

### Wetlands

Bethany Wallace, a Univ. of Akron student, will assist with wetlands monitoring at CUVA this summer.

### White-tail Deer Monitoring

Annual reports for 2008 monitoring were completed and sent to the parks. Deer numbers increased at ARPO over the last years, but only small increases occurred at PERI and WICR.

### Park Acronyms

ARPO = Arkansas Post National Memorial  
BUFF = Buffalo National River  
CUVA = Cuyahoga Valley National Park  
EFMO = Effigy Mounds National Monument  
GWCA = Geo. Washington Carver Nat. Mon.  
HEHO = Herbert Hoover Nat. Historic Site  
HOME = Homestead Nat. Mon. of America

## A Mold-board Visitor Center

Homestead National Monument of America celebrates May 20th, when the Homestead Act of 1862 became law, with the opening of its new Heritage Center.

The Heritage Center includes a homesteading museum featuring exhibits on the Act's impacts on our nation's expansion and development. The museum tells about each of the thirty states where the Act applied and the transfer of 270 million acres of land from federal to private ownership.

The Heritage Center's modern design blends symbols of the past. The curved roof resembles the shape of sod turned up by a plow blade. The roof's apex points west, toward westward expansion. The silhouette looks like a mold-board plow, the tool that broke the prairie sod and opened the soil to farming.

"The building is somewhat futur-



istic in its appearance," said Mark Engler, the park's superintendent. "This is very appropriate when one considers that the Homestead Act was all about the future. Homesteaders sought better lives for themselves and their children, the government sought to populate and improve the West, and immigrants came here to homestead and for opportunities they often did not have in their home countries. Of course, the law also impacted American Indian tribes by opening up their traditional lands to homesteading farmers."

Nebraska Travel Industry named the Heritage Center its Outstanding Tourism Attraction for 2007. The Heritage Center was honored with a Rising Star Award by NEBRASKA Land Foundation and its designers received an award from the American Institute of Architects.

Homestead National Monument of America was created in 1936 from the former Daniel Freeman homestead, one of the very first tracts claimed on January 1, 1863; the day the Homestead Act became effective. The new Heritage Center is a fitting visitor center for this park. — Sherry Middlemis-Brown

## From the Director— Partnerships

David Bowles and I recently met with Missouri State University officials to discuss extending our cooperative agreement another five years. This caused me to reflect on the first five years of collaboration.

The partnership with Missouri State has born out all the expected benefits, and more. Students play an important role in operations of the network as field crew members, lab assistants and interpretive writers. Students, in turn, receive educational opportunities and real world experience through their interaction with agency scientists.

Graduate student research focuses on park information needs through our participation on graduate committees. University faculty and

network scientists collaborate on a number of monitoring related projects, resulting in products ranging from peer-reviewed journal articles to public information brochures.

The partnership with Missouri State also provides new opportunities to utilize alternative fund sources to promote monitoring objectives. This is evidenced in the creation of a fire ecology research associate position with interagency fire program funds.

Looking ahead, we will continue engaging faculty and students in the monitoring program, while pursuing new initiatives. University officials are investigating options for cost sharing on the proposed Ozarks Science and Learning Center to take advantage of Centennial Challenge opportunities. Together, we can accomplish much more than we can separately.

## More on the Web

Visit HOME at <http://www.nps.gov/home/>

Information on HTLN annual meeting [http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/im/monitor/networks/HTLN/HTLN\\_review.cfm](http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/im/monitor/networks/HTLN/HTLN_review.cfm)

Missouri State University at <http://www.missouristate.edu/>