

# The Mississippi River Project, Rock Island District is a **GI Globally Important Bird Area** Designated by the American Bird Conservancy. Joe Lundh, US Army Corps of Engineers

## Background on the IBA Program

•The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is managed through cooperative effort of the American Bird Conservancy and the National Audubon Society.

•Started in the 1980s in Europe leading to the designation of over 3500 sites. US efforts started in 1995.



•The Mississippi River Project is one of over 500 Globally Important Bird Areas in the US.

•The associated Fish and Wildlife Refuges, the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge and the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, also have the same IBA status.

•The initial goal of the IBA program is to recognize sites that have high value to bird conservation.

## Bird Habitat of the Mississippi River Project



- 55,000 acres of bottomland forest
- Significant acres of backwater lakes, sloughs, and marshes
- Sand prairie also found on the Project
- Covers a total of 314 river miles

• Combined 210,000 acres of land and water

• Major flyway corridor for many bird groups: waterfowl, hawks, eagles, neo-tropical migrants, and other passerines.

• Most bottomland forest found along the Mississippi River in this District is located on areas under federal management.

## Partnerships

• 1963 Cooperative Agreement – the latest of agreements that leases approximately 90 percent of Mississippi River Project land to the FWS for two refuges. Portions of land were also leased in turn to state management in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri.

• Forested resource managed cooperatively with the Mississippi River Project, FWS, state DNRs, and other involved parties since 1981.

• Midwest Raptor Research Fund has been funded by both the Mississippi River Project, FWS, and the State of Illinois for monitoring work on the red-shouldered hawk since 1992.

• American Bird Conservancy- Globally Important Bird Area status recognized in June of 2001.

## Avian Monitoring

• Bird surveys done since 1983.

• Found over 150 bird species on Project - of these 80 species are neo-tropical migrants.

• Found 9 species of birds on surveys that were either federally or state listed as threatened or endangered (using Iowa and Illinois lists only).

• Monitoring provides a baseline for bird species using the bottomland forest. Potentially could be used to examine trends in bird populations.

• Consistent methodology and execution of bird survey work has created a valuable database for cooperating partners to use.



• Surveys done annually at up to 13 sites on Huron Island in Pool 18 and 5 sites at Pleasant Creek in Pool 13.

• Surveys are five minute point counts where all bird species and numbers are recorded and notes whether they were identified by sight, sound, or were flying over.



## Threatened and Endangered Species found on project during surveys.

Status	Listing	Species
Threatened	Federal, IL (E in IA)	Bald Eagle
Endangered	IL, IA	Red-Shouldered Hawk
T	IL	Brown Creeper
T	IL	Sandhill Crane
T	IL	Pied-billed Grebe
E	IL	Black Tern
E	IL	Osprey
E	IL	Black-crowned Night Heron
E	IL	Yellow-crowned Night Heron

## Neo-tropical Migrants

• Over 80 species of neo-tropical migrants found on project to date.

• Species travel annually from South America to nest in North America.

• The Mississippi River is used as a corridor providing food and shelter for migrating birds. Some of the species nest on project lands and lands in cooperative management.

• Many of these species are thought to be declining in numbers due to habitat loss both in North and South America.



## Waterfowl, Hawks, and other Migrating Birds



• Each year, in the spring and fall, millions of ducks, geese, shorebirds, gulls, and hawks migrate along the Mississippi River corridor

• Waterfowl include species like mallards, canvasbacks, pintail, teal, gadwall, wood duck, and many others.



## Bald Eagle

• Fewer than 450 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states in the 1960s.

• Now, a large number of over-wintering eagles use the project yearly. They utilize the open water below lock and dams for feeding.

• Record numbers of eagle seen in the winter of 2000-2001. Over 600 eagles seen at one time at Lock and Dam 18.

• Eagle Watches are coordinated by the Corps at many sites along the Upper Mississippi River yearly. For more information visit <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/missriver/>.

## Red-Shouldered Hawk

• Endangered species in Iowa and Illinois.

• Needs large tracts of floodplain forest for foraging and nesting.

• There are relatively few known nesting locations within project lands. A total of only 7 red-shouldered hawk nesting areas located in 2001 along the Rock Island District of the Upper Mississippi River.

• Midwest Raptor Research Fund has done yearly nest searching and monitoring through funding and support from the Mississippi River Project along with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Fish and Wildlife Service since 1992.

• Monitoring has provided information on habitat needs, foraging habits, nesting cycle, nesting success, and occupation.

