

Guard

Continued from Page 1

the property on several occasions. The large white heron is listed by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission as threatened and by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources as endangered.

"Protecting the Great Egret as a part of Kentucky's natural heritage also serves to protect at least three other endangered species that use the same habitat and are likely to be present on the training facility," Turner said. "Protecting its habitat — wetlands — also provides recreational hunting and fishing opportunities for the trainees."

Potential bat habitat also was located in several areas including habitat for the gray bat, which is a federally listed endangered species.

"Sink holes were found in an un-mined portion of the facility and are likely interconnected through wet cave passages, which could serve as bat habitat," Turner said. "This habitat has been destroyed on almost all of the facility and the identified sink holes are the only opportunity to protect cave resources, including the bat and many other cave dwellers, on the facility."

Based on these findings, the district completed a Threatened & Endangered Species (T&E) Management Plan in December, which provided detailed management recommendations for 11 species including nine birds, one snake and one bat that have been documented on the training facility. Conservation and habitat restoration recommendations were made for the other 55 listed species that could potentially be found on the facility. The T&E management plan is designed to recommend a number of species-specific investigations to conclusively determine whether threatened or endangered bats,

butterflies or other species are present on the site. "All of our recommendations take the KYARNG training mission into full consideration as the primary purpose of the facility," Turner said.

That understanding helped forge a great working relationship between the two organizations.

"Working with USACE was like working with someone in our own office," said Ricky French, natural resource manager.

"The group knew the mission, the roles to achieve the mission and the path forward to achieve those goals."

The \$100,000 investigation included completing the field work and a threatened and endangered species management plan by the end of the year. "This was a substantial achievement on a very tight schedule," Beckham said. "The project delivery team and our planning section have really provided outstanding service with minimal direction."

"Kentucky National Guard is a great partner to work with and we really appreciate the opportunities we have received from them to work together," Beckham said.

The process went so well that the KYARNG anticipates contracting with the Corps of Engineers to conduct a wetlands delineation survey. It is expected to start in late summer 2013, following approval and funding by the KYARNG.

"Previous wetland surveys of the facility are of questionable value as relates to wetlands regulated under the provisions of the Clean Water Act," Turner said.

"The survey by Louisville District staff will correct this deficiency and allow the Kentucky Army National Guard to focus on areas needing protection and to train in areas that are not of such concern."

Volunteers aid environmental mission

By Sheila Tunney
Pittsburgh District

It's no wonder Youghiogheny Lake's Natural Resource Specialist Suzanne Estock received the Take Pride in America's Federal Land Manager Award in 2012. She has been involved in volunteer efforts beneficial to the Corps of Engineers and caring for public lands for more than 30 years. And her combined efforts with volunteer missions have resulted in more than 10,000 hours of service.

"This award is great for the 'Yough,' combined with the project of the year award they won last year," said Southern Area Ranger Rick Miller who nominated Estock. "All of our people are doing some really great things, which can make it challenging to determine which person to nominate. Volunteer programs affect the whole project and the whole team."

One of the programs involving volunteers and bolstered by Estock was getting data loggers installed on the lake's nine main tributaries. The data loggers measure temperature, conductivity and flow into the Youghiogheny reservoir — one of the most pristine, mountain spring fed lakes in the Pittsburgh District.

She coordinated with the Mountain Watershed Association, which oversees the Youghiogheny RiverKeepers Program, in order to obtain the equipment and recruited volunteers to install it. The volunteers have been downloading data on a recurring basis since November 2011.

"We were concerned about the health of the lake because of increased development in this area of southwestern Pennsylvania. A stream monitoring program would allow us to get a pulse on river conditions. I got the idea that this might be something that would work," Estock said.

She said her boss was immediately on board with the idea. She then contacted the



Youghiogheny Natural Resource Specialist Suzanne Estock explains the signs of a successful wood duck hatch to volunteer Mike Thompson. (USACE photo)

MWA and Pittsburgh District biologist Rose Reilly, who oversees water quality testing on the district's 16 lakes. After that, Estock said, everything just fell into place.

Reilly, she said, was instrumental in getting more equipment and providing in-depth expertise on water quality monitoring.

"The Yough is the first lake in the district — possibly division or further — to have all of its tributaries monitored," Miller said. "It's a big deal!"

The monitors were central in determining the cause of a fish kill at the lake in September. Results of testing in the lake and from the data loggers on the tributaries confirmed the fish kill was not caused by a human source of pollution.

"We don't have the personnel to achieve

our environmental mission without the help of volunteers," Miller said.

Estock has been the project's volunteer coordinator for the past seven years. Her efforts extend to other major volunteer events, including cleanup for National Public Lands Day, installation of wood duck boxes around the lake and the project's annual Special Recreation Day, which has been held for the past 41 years.

"It's one of the better parts of my job. It gets me out of the office more, and it's nice to get to know people this way," she said. "They come from all walks of life...former ministers, executives, homemakers...it runs the gamut." Many of them, she said, are retired or near retirement age and are looking for ways to give back to society.