

Kansas City District Makes Migratory Birds A Priority

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Most people consider America's Heartland as 'fly over states.' That's no big surprise with the millions of birds that migrate through the central flyway annually. The central flyway is a bird migration route ranging from Canada's boreal forest and parklands across the Great Plains and down to the Texas Gulf Coast. With over two thirds of the Kansas City District (NWK) land base in the central flyway, it's easy to recognize the critical stop over habitat that USACE lakes provide during the annual migration.

From waterfowl hunters to birders, to federal and state land managers, migratory bird habitat sits high on the conservation mantle. The Kansas City District has built a strong history in partnering for migratory bird conservation with latest efforts focusing on bald eagles, least terns, and piping plovers, to name a few. Recently, NWK partnered with Ducks Unlimited (DU), Friends of the Wild Whoopers (FOTWW), and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to focus on developing critical stop over habitat for migratory birds, with an emphasis on threatened and endangered species.

In 2017 Kanopolis Lake partnered with DU to develop and construct the Big Bottoms Wetlands. DU received funding for the project through a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant that supported the design and scoping of the project. USACE is using

an agriculture leasing program at Kanopolis Lake to fund the construction of the wetlands. Construction began in 2018 and is ongoing. Once completed, the wetland will consist of 3 cells totaling 232 acres providing critical stopover habitat for migratory birds.

Last year USACE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the FOTWW to assist in the recovery of the

assessments of areas on USACE-managed lands has confirmed our initial belief that these areas do currently provide important migration stopover habitat. With some minor habitat management actions those benefits can be increased," said Chester McConnell. Additional areas have been identified where vegetation control will create more desirable whooping crane habitat.

Record flooding across the Heartland has greatly impacted lake operations this year, thus delaying efforts to improve critical stopover habitat. NWK will continue to rely on these partnerships to develop work plans that maintain and improve existing stopover habitat and create additional stopover habitat for migratory birds.

USACE, DU, FOTWW, and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks recognize their place in migratory bird conservation and are committed to ensuring that the critical stopover habitat at these lakes remains active in recovery efforts.



NWD ENS business line manager Mike Langeslay, Milford Park Manager Ken Wenger, NWK Conservation Biologist Dave Hoover, and Milford Lake State Wildlife Area staff discuss the benefits wetlands at Milford Lake provide during central flyway migration.

endangered whooping crane. Past radio telemetry conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and direct field observation has documented many migration stopovers occurring on USACE-managed lakes in the central flyway. Last summer, NWK Conversation Biologist David Hoover and President of FOTWW Chester McConnell conducted field assessments at Milford, Kanopolis, Wilson, and Harlan County Lakes to determine if any suitable areas could be managed or appropriately developed to provide migration stopover habitat for whooping cranes. "Our preliminary

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