Greetings to all DU supporters and volunteers!

First, I want to apologize for not being able to attend our state convention this past January 31 and February 1, 2020 at the Par-a-Dice Hotel and Casino in Peoria. I was down and out with a stomach "bug" and a severe sinus infection. After five rounds of antibiotics over six weeks, I am happy to report that I am feeling much better.

All of this just in time to contend with the Covid 19 pandemic that we find ourselves in the middle of now. No matter what if you have an essential job or not, this is affecting us all.

In these unprecedented times, Ducks Unlimited is not immune. Many of our spring events in Illinois have been postponed and rescheduled for this summer or early fall. Over the entire country more than 2,000 events have been impacted. DU has even had to reschedule the National Convention from the end of May and early June until September 16-20, 2020 in Orlando, Florida. I still want to urge all that can to attend the National Convention if at all possible.

Please remember that DU, like most businesses, is dependent on a dependable cash flow from the fundraisers and events that they hold. The bills still come due and need to be paid. To help offset the standard cash flow sources, DU is having "on-line" auctions to bring in "bucks for the ducks". Please take time to check your social media or to go on line to see what DU is offering and make a bid on items in which you may be interested. As you will see, DU is offering many decoys, DU signs, DU specialty items and many guns as well as hunting trips, fishing trips and even a golf outing to Pebble Beach!

It may seem like this pandemic is never ending, but I assure you that it will end! With your continued support and interest in Ducks Unlimited we can make it through these troubling times. Until it is safe to do otherwise, please shelter in place, do social distancing and stay at home. If you do have to venture out, please wear a face mask and gloves to protect not only yourself, but also your loved ones.

Also, don't forget to support all those businesses that have so generously donated to Ducks Unlimited through your local events over the years. Its time to let them know we really appreciate their support!

Let's do everything that we can to keep the "stimulus" money in America with American companies!

Until next time, may you and yours be safe, healthy, and may God bless us all!

Capy
IL DU State Convention Recap

There was plenty of reason to celebrate in East Peoria as Illinois Ducks Unlimited volunteers and staff joined for the 2020 State Convention! The first weekend in February marks this annual State Convention as more than 200 DU leaders from across the State gather to recognize the yearly accomplishments within Illinois Ducks Unlimited. The camaraderie is second to none with special events such as:

- Friday Night Welcome Party with Band
- Vendor Row
- Saturday Awards Luncheon featuring Keynote Speaker
- Conservation Meet & Great
- Major Donor Reception
- Saturday Evening Banquet
- Hospitality Room

And it would not be a DU event without a quality selection of raffle and auction items including over 20 guns throughout the Convention!

Looking forward, we welcome everyone to join us Jan 31st - Feb 1st, 2021 in East Peoria for another exciting Convention full of good people and good times!

Here is a look at some of the fun from 2020!

Banquet night
Friday welcome!
20 gun raffle
Major donors
Table gun winners
Vendor row
Strange times, Good friends

As we weave our way through this Covid-19 crisis, we have entered a time in which nobody has experienced since the early 1900’s. This is new to us. How do we perform our daily tasks? What are we doing to protect ourselves and our loved ones? We live in an uncertain time, to say the least, filled with doubt and uncertainty.

But, as we progress through our shelter in place guidelines, I believe we are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. As slow as it may seem, there will be an end to this. And eventually, life, once again, will return to normal.

In the meantime, for the Regional Directors in Illinois, we have our best friends by our side; Man’s best friend. As I am sure so many DU volunteers find themselves in the same situation, it’s always great to have your best friend there for support. They give us friendship, comfort and a few laughs along the way. Here are a few pics of daily life as an RD. I know I can speak for all of us, there’s no better way to work and shelter in place than to have your best buddy right there with you.
Games of Chance- Ring Toss with a DU Twist

We all enjoy seeing a new game at a DU event we attend. In the Winter and Spring events I was able to attend before COVID-19 shutdown, I saw the old carnival game “Ring Toss” being used by two chapters in a successful way. The first version on the game was created by the Litchfield Chapter by fastening 5 different decoy heads to a vertical board and having attendees pay for a chance to place a ring on the decoy head. Each decoy head was given a value from 5 to 20. When the player tossed a ring on the decoy neck, the player received raffle tickets on a gun depending on the ticket value of the decoy neck. The chapter used one of the DU incentive guns they had earned, and the raffle was quite successful netting $1,100.00

The second Ring Toss game I saw this Spring was at the Logan County banquet in Lincoln. The Logan County chapter used numerous bottles of donated alcohol and placed them on a low platform and people would toss the rings to slip it over the neck of a bottle of booze. Both games have our event attendees the opportunity to have a little fun while playing a game and testing your skills.
Greetings from ILDU Development

Greetings ILDU,

I hope you are all managing during these times of great uncertainty and trial, while staying safe and health with your families. First I want to thank all the DU volunteers for your creativity and tremendous efforts to mitigate the hit to Ducks Unlimited during the height of event season. The outpouring of calls that I personally have gotten from supporters all over our state asking “what they can do to help DU?” in the face of their own personal struggles proves to me once again that ILDU is a FAMILY!!

My answer to that question is the same, “whatever you can”! You can participate in and promote Illinois Online Auctions, utilize your personal contacts and social networks, and if you’re able – make a gift! DU’s strength has always been our members and volunteers that go above and beyond to deliver our shared passion – preserve wetland habitats for the benefit of waterfowl and the next generation of sportsman. In the 83 years since DU was established, that passion has helped traverse war and conflict, natural disasters and severe economic downturns. Now in the face of a global pandemic, we again need your help to ensure our vital wetland resources are protected and the momentum for creating new habitat acres is not stifled.

You can make a huge difference with a small gift or a pledge for future gifts. Please visit https://www.ducks.org/LeadersInGiving and consider making an investment in our shared passion.

Thank you as always for what you do for Ducks Unlimited and conservation! I am praying for you and your family and cannot wait to hit the road when this is over and see you soon! In the meantime, please don’t hesitate to call me anytime!

Sincerely yours,

James Roberts
As I have been meeting with the Area and District Chairmen this summer, they all have heard me talk about the need for more volunteers. Volunteers have been the key to IL’s success over the years, but we have a lack of volunteers for a state the size of IL.

The committee level which makes our chapters work the best can always use more volunteers, and one doesn’t have to be busy all the time! There is room for you to step up and do something, regardless of how much time you can afford to donate. Tom

**Central Illinois Chapter Startups Needed:**
- Vermillion County—Danville
- Shelbyville
- Bloomington/Normal

**CONTACT:** JKing@ducks.org

**Areas in Central Illinois needing additional Volunteers**
- Macon County
- Champaign County
- Quincy
- Pike County
- Jacksonville
- Manito
- Northern Tazewell
- Clinton
- Tri-County
- Pekin

**Southern Illinois Chapter Startups Needed:**
- Robinson
- O’Fallon
- Vandalia

**CONTACT:** Trevor Hickman
THickman@ducks.org

**Northwest Illinois Chapter Startups Needed:**
- Galesburg
- Monmouth
- Galena
- Aledo

**CONTACT:** BBrown2@ducks.org

**Northeastern Illinois Chapter Startups Needed:**
- Grundy County
- Elgin

**CONTACT:** mrichard@ducks.org

**“IL DU needs chapters in these areas. If you know of anyone in these areas please contact the State Chairman or the local Regional Director”**

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**Illinois Ducks Unlimited Contacts**

**Ducks Unlimited National Officers**
- **Regional Vice President**
  - Galen Johnson
  - Bill Sarafin
- **At-Large Member**
  - Rex Schultz

**Ducks Unlimited Staff**
- **Senior Regional Director-NW Illinois**
  - Brett Brown bbrown2@ducks.org
- **Senior Regional Director-Central Illinois**
  - Jim King jking@ducks.org
- **Regional Director-NE Illinois**
  - Matt Richard mrichard@ducks.org
- **Regional Director-Southern Illinois**
  - Trevor Hickman THickman@ducks.org
- **Manager of Conservation-Illinois**
  - Mark Flaspohler MFlaspohler@ducks.org

**Regional Biologist-Illinois/Indiana**
- Mike Sertle msertle@ducks.org

**Regional Biologist - BRI**
- Dane Cramer dcramer@ducks.org

**Director of Fundraising & Volunteer Relations**
- Todd Carlton tcarlton@ducks.org

**Director of Development**
- James Roberts jroberts@ducks.org

**Illinois State Chairman**
- Tom Tomlinson Tomt1946@icloud.com

**State Campaign Chairman**
- Terry Fuchs tpfox@mtco.com

**State Treasurer**
- Brent Ohlinger bohlinger@firststatebank.biz

**State Secretary**
- Mark Schore schore_mark@cat.com

**State Convention Chairman**
- Ray Dolan supportive@comcast.net

**State Convention Co-Chairman**
- Bill Beckmeyer fowltalker@aol.com

**State Shooting Chairman**
- Scott Hilpert scott.hilpert@ubs.com

**IL State Youth & Education Chairman**
- Vicki Mandurano vmmandurano@hotmail.com

**State Calendar Chairman**
- Frank Lemcke frank.lemcke@bn.com

**State Conservation Chairman**
- Mark Schore schore_mark@cat.com

**State Webmaster**
- Jonathan Fields jfields@jfields.com

**Newsletter Editor**
- Brian Popoff brianpopoff@yahoo.com
Every Volunteer Should Own a DU License Plate!

We MUST sell at least 1,000 Illinois DU Specialty License plates per year. If we fall below 1,000 plates for 2 consecutive years, the SOS's office may pull all existing IL DU specialty plates off the road and replace them with the universal specialty plate with a DU sticker. According to the SOS's office, we currently have 827 IL DU specialty plates on the road. We are 173 plates away from reaching our goal and need your support to push us to 1,000!

To get your DU license plate, go to http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/ and click on "Pick-A-Plate" to order your DU license plate today.

Help Us Reach Our Goal of **1,000**
DU Specialty License Plates

[Image of IL DU Specialty License Plate]

827
(as of March 27, 2020)
The Illinois State Duck Stamp Supports Canadian and Illinois Waterfowl Habitat

Much like purchasing the Federal Duck Stamp, one of the easiest ways that anyone can support both Canadian and Illinois bird habitat conservation is by buying Illinois State Duck Stamps. Per state legislation, a portion of each IL Duck Stamp is sent to Canada for breeding grounds conservation and a portion is allocated in-state to waterfowl projects on Illinois Department of Natural Resources properties. Both of these pots of funds are allocated through an annual grant proposal process open to eligible applicants. In addition to both DUC and DUI staff attending the annual meetings to assist in presenting or reviewing these proposals, Terry Fuchs serves as IL DU’s appointed “IL State Duck Stamp Committee Representative” providing the official voice and vote on behalf of both organizations.

In additional to being a Peoria Chapter Committee Member since 1976, a past State Chairman, the recent Major Donor Chairman, and wearing many other DU Volunteer hats, Terry has represented DU on the IL State Duck Stamp Committee since 1998. Dedicating endless hours of his own time to stay current on State of Illinois training requirements, read and review dozens of proposals, and attend multiple meetings, Terry has been a stalwart for IL DU and securing IL Duck Stamp funding for over 20 years. During that time, he has helped to secure tens of millions of conservation funds for DUC and DUI. And, we look forward too many more years of Terry’s experience, knowledge, and guidance in securing these important dollars for the ducks.

Those dollars for the ducks are then focused upon two areas important to both DU and Illinois duck hunters: the nesting grounds of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the state waterfowl management areas within Illinois. In 2019, DUC was awarded $1.7M for protection, restoration, and enhancement of the breeding landscape of Prairie Canada. Those funds will be matched by NAWCA, DUI, and DUC to provide ~$8M total in breeding landscape conservation. With just over $11.4M of IL Duck Stamp funds awarded to DUC to date, they have been able to conserve and positively impact hundreds of thousands of acres of critical prairie pothole wetland and grassland breeding habitat.

Equally important to DU’s mission is the annual allocation of ~$250,000 of IL Duck Stamp funds to in-state waterfowl and wetlands projects located on IDNR properties. While these funds are only available internally to the IDNR, they benefit DU tremendously by providing the IDNR with important project cost-share dollars that can also be used as matching funds to help DU leverage NAWCA grants. In 2020 alone, these funds were allocated to projects at Rice Lake SFWA, Sanganois SFWA, and Cache River SNA, all of which are included as projects with existing $1M NAWCA grants. Examples of other past and present projects that combined these Duck Stamp funds with DU funds include Donnelley-DePue SFWA, Woodford SFWA, and Horseshoe Lake SP.

As a long-standing habitat funding source, the IL Duck Stamp is critical to DUC and DUI’s abilities to continue to partner on important wetlands projects and leverage grants to implement habitat conservation in both Canada and Illinois. Thank you for not only your support of Ducks Unlimited, but for your continued purchase of the IL State Duck Stamp and all of the great waterfowl conservation work it supports both at home and abroad.
News From the Field (Cont.)

**Name of project:** Prairie State Wetlands Partnership - (Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, FWS-Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, Private Landowner, and IL State Habitat Grant funds)

**Project Location:** LaSalle, Kendall, Grundy, Will, Kankakee, Livingston, Kankakee, and Iroquois Counties, East-central IL – ~60 acres on private lands; To-be-expanded to additional areas of northern Illinois in the coming years.

**Status of project:** Starting in Fall 2019 with completion by Fall 2021

**Size/scope of project:** DU is providing staff support and federally awarded cost-share funds to PF and the FWS-PFW to restore and enhance wetlands located upon existing CREP-enrolled grasslands. FWS-PFW and PF staff are identifying, developing, and delivering these wetland projects with DU support. This region of Illinois is former prairie pothole landscape and has an abundance of restorable wetlands and grasslands.

**Goals of the project:** Through the completion of this project PF, FWS-PFW and DU propose to increase migration, breeding, and brood-rearing habitat important for waterfowl and a variety of other wildlife species in this region of Illinois.

**Wildlife benefits:** Improved habitat conditions and food resources for a number of waterfowl, wildlife and other wetland-dependent species. As DU expands its breeding habitat program across northern Illinois, these types of projects will be an important component.

**Human/social benefits:** These wetlands offer not only the potential for increased recreation but are also located within a region of Illinois that is one of the highest contributors to Gulf Hypoxia. These “headwaters” wetlands will provide much-needed water quality and flood attenuation services too.

**Photo:** Mallards during fall migration feeding in a restored Iroquois Co. wetland.
News From the Field (Cont.)

**Name of project:** Big Muddy Bottomland Restorations, Units 3, 17, and 18 – (Funding provided by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Ducks Unlimited, and the U.S. Forest Service)

**Project Location:** Jackson County, Southern IL

Status of project: Project planning began in 2015, project construction expected to take place summer 2020

**Size/scope of project:** DU and the USFS will construct a series of small, rock-reinforced earthen berms to plug drainage ditches, stabilize the natural grade, and stop erosion, head cutting, and un-natural drainage of these low areas to improve seasonal wetland functions of BMUs 3, 17, & 18. This project will restore approximately 107 acres of mixed bottomland hardwood forested wetlands, mimicking the natural regime.

**Goals of the project:** The goal of this project is to restore the natural hydrology and wetland functions to the Big Muddy River’s floodplains on the unprotected side of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s Big Muddy Levee. The earliest available aerially imagery shows that these wetland basins were drained prior to 1938 to make farming possible along the river.

**Wildlife benefits:** Restored wetlands on this floodplain will benefit federally endangered Indiana bats and federally threatened northern long-eared bats, as well as other important bottomland forest species such as prothonotary warblers and timber rattlesnakes. Use of restored wetlands by migratory waterfowl species including wood ducks, mallards, northern pintails, and gadwall is expected to be significant.

**Human/social benefits:** The Big Muddy River is true to its name; its big and its muddy. By plugging these historically drained basins, flood waters that would have filled them and ran out with falling water levels will now be captured. Less water running downstream means less damage done by floodwaters downstream. It also means that sediment and nutrients in the water has time to settle out and standing water can recharge groundwater aquifers. Not to mention that these should be some pretty spectacular waterfowl hunting spots on public land.

**Images:** Side-by-side aerial view and plan view of Big Muddy Unit 3 restoration site in the Shawnee NF.
LOOKING AHEAD

We have a number of great projects and opportunities ahead of us in Illinois:

**Northern Illinois** – DU and IDNR will begin the delivery of the 200-acre Coleman Lake enhancement project at Donnelley-DePue SFWA. DU will be hosting a Dedication at the Kennedy Tract for the naming celebration of the “Waldbuesser Marsh” Unit in August 2020. DU engineers will be conducting initial site visits at Big Bend SFWA and Black Crown Marsh SNA to begin identifying future projects. And, DU will exploring expanding our breeding habitat work across northern Illinois.

**Central Illinois** – DU engineers will soon be surveying and designing upcoming projects at Sanganois, Anderson Lake, and Rice Lake SFWAs, and Emiquon Preserve, as part of the $1M Conserving the Illinois River Legacy NAWCA grant. DU engineers will also be working on the installation of a new pump for the Woodford SFWA Greentree Unit, to be completed over the winter. We will also continue to further develop project opportunities at Delair, Meredosia, and Emiquon NWRs and other IDNR SFWAs, as we also continue to explore public and private wetland conservation opportunities to help us expand our program along the Mississippi River.

**Southern Illinois** – This spring we’re planning to bid construction contracts on several projects to be built this summer. Projects at Cache River SNA and Shawnee NF should establish a few new hunting spots on public lands and a refuge project at Horseshoe Lake SP should enhance hunt quality. You can bet we’ll be working hard to make sure they’re all wrapped up before hunting season.

With a crucial mid-latitude location in the Mississippi Flyway, both Illinois and the BRI will continue to be an important DU focus for waterfowl and wetlands conservation.

Thank you for all that you do for the Ducks!

Michael Sertle  
DU Regional Biologist – IL/IN

Dane Cramer  
DU Regional Biologist – BRI