

## DU IMPROVES RECREATIONAL ACCESS TO 750 ACRES AT STEWART LAKE

Nearly 750 acres of Stewart Lake, one of the best remaining and least disturbed backwater lakes in the Mason County region of the Illinois River Valley, is open to waterfowl hunters and birders. Ducks Unlimited in September donated the western portion of the lake to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The IDNR is including the lake into the Sanganois State Fish and Wildlife Area. Ducks Unlimited is exploring the possibility of donating the east end of the lake, another 750 acres, to the Illinois Audubon Society to become a permanent sanctuary for waterfowl and other migratory birds.

Funding support for the acquisition of Stewart Lake is being provided by Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Grand Victoria Foundation.



## JENKINS MARSH ATTRACTING MIGRATING WATERFOWL

Jenkins Marsh, one of DU's flagship projects of the Big Rivers Initiative, got a boost in 2016. Ducks Unlimited in 2010 purchased the 246-acre property, which adjoins both Woodford County State Fish and Wildlife Area and Upper Peoria Lake, a naturally occurring lake along the Illinois River. This winter, DU through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources completed a 50-acre upland and wetland prairie restoration. This is the next step in DU's eventual full restoration of the property and transfer to IDNR. Ducks Unlimited and partners will begin controlling woody and noxious invasive species in 2017, and will start wetland restorations this fall.

The restored marsh will benefit numerous species of waterfowl, including gadwall, teal, northern pintails, ring-necked ducks, and lesser scaup – a diving duck species that used to be abundantly found on Upper Peoria Lake, but that has declined precipitously due to degraded habitat.



## TRI-STATE, 2,300-ACRE HEART OF THE BIG RIVERS PROJECT TO BEGIN

Waterfowl, wildlife and people will benefit from more than 2,300 acres of Ducks Unlimited conservation projects across southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and western Kentucky. Ducks Unlimited and 20 partners were awarded a \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands in the confluence of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. With \$2.87 million in matching funds from DU and its partners, the total project investment will be \$3.87 million over three years. DU and its conservation partners will permanently protect 751 acres of forested, emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands, restore water to an additional 1,282 acres and enhance 300 acres of existing degraded wetlands. More than 60 percent of the land will be open to public access.

Illinois projects include:

- Reforest 610 acres of bottomland hardwood forest throughout Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge.
- Acquire 57-acre private land tract for inclusion into Shawnee National Forest.
- Restore 129 acres and enhance 192 acres of wetlands within Oakwood Bottoms area of Shawnee National Forest.



## 3,000-ACRE GREAT RIVERS PROJECT TO CONCLUDE THIS YEAR

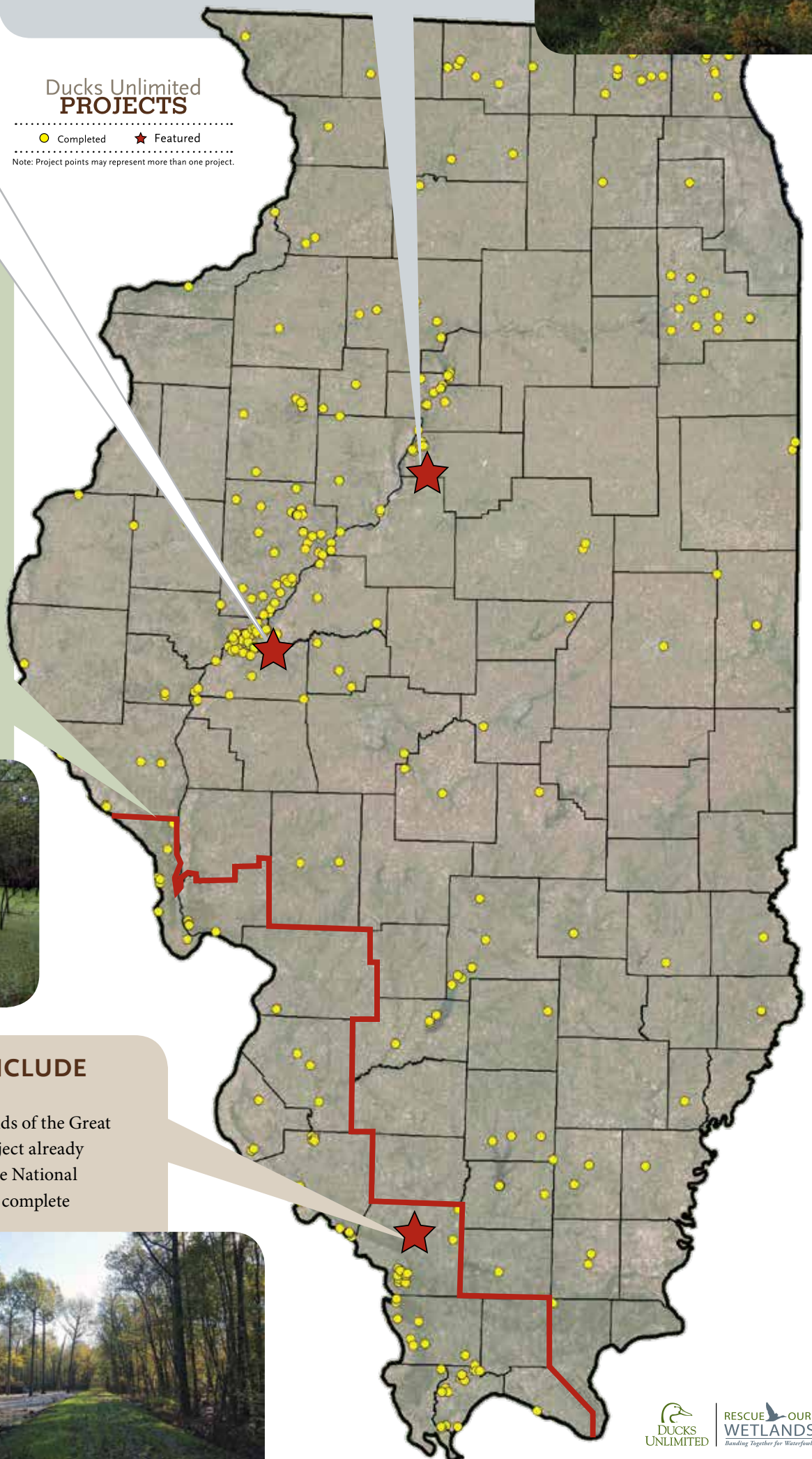
Ducks Unlimited in 2017 will wrap up its nearly 3,000-acre Bottomlands of the Great Rivers conservation project in southwestern Illinois. The NAWCA project already has protected, restored and enhanced about 2,100 acres on the Shawnee National Forest and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. This year DU will complete a 700-acre enhancement at Oakwood Bottoms. Conservation partners include the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wetlands America Trust, National Wild Turkey Federation, Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development, Friends of the Cache River Watershed, Grand Tower D&LD, Forrest-Keeling Nursery, and private landowners.



### Ducks Unlimited PROJECTS

- Completed (Yellow Dot)
- Featured (Red Star)

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.





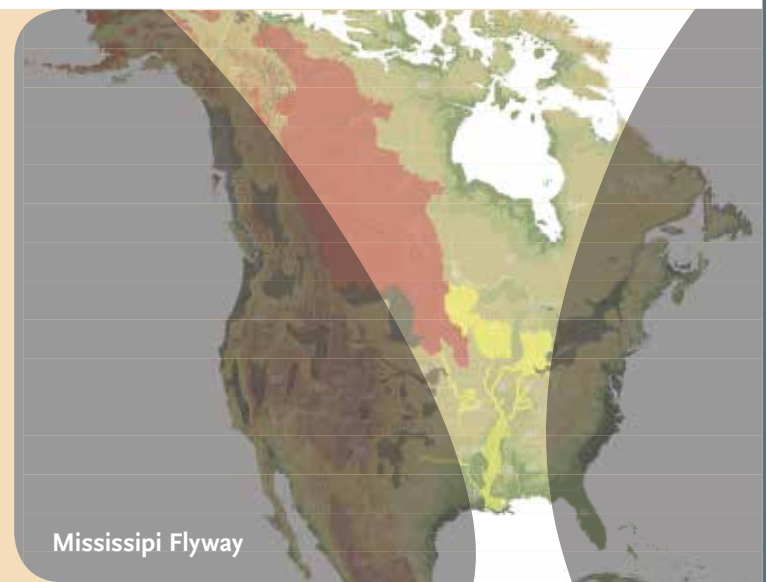
Last year, Ducks Unlimited continued to protect and restore Illinois' wetland habitats for waterfowl and recreational use.

A crucial link in the Mississippi Flyway, Illinois has a proud and vibrant hunting heritage. From the waterfowler-rich Chicago region, south down the historic Illinois River Valley to North America's greatest floodplain, the Confluence Region of the Mississippi, Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers, Illinois hums with wetland habitat and supporters wanting to see it improved.

Illinois is an important piece of Ducks Unlimited's Big Rivers Initiative, the larger, regional conservation effort in the heart of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. The Big Rivers Initiative focuses on the restoration, enhancement and protection of wetlands used by millions of waterfowl as they migrate between wintering and breeding grounds each year. This system is the lifeblood not just for waterfowl and other wildlife, but also for the people in this region.

DU's conservation work has benefits beyond ducks and geese. Illinois is one of the states heavily responsible for the water quality sent downstream via the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Illinois has lost 85 percent of its wetlands, which helps filter rainwater before it enters the river ways. In addition to providing habitat, Ducks Unlimited is committed to helping improve water quality as part of our conservation mission.

In 2016 Ducks Unlimited conserved nearly 1,800 acres across 11 completed projects and invested more than \$912,000. Our work has reached all corners of the state and will expand in 2017.



## LOOKING AHEAD

Ducks Unlimited will expand its conservation work in Illinois. Protecting land from development will continue, along with expanding the restoration and enhancement of waterfowl habitat on public land.

**Public land protection** – Ducks Unlimited through Wetlands America Trust has completed the acquisition of a 146-acre property on Upper Peoria Lake. This year, the land will be donated to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to be included into the Woodford County State Fish and Wildlife Area.

**Public land enhancement** – As part of a \$250,000 Wildlife Conservation Society Climate Adaptation Grant, Ducks Unlimited will complete a 275-acre bottomland hardwood reforestation at Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Alexander, Johnson, Pulaski and Union Counties. Also scheduled for completion is the enhancement of nearly 450 acres of timber in Oakwood Bottoms.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Ducks Unlimited is celebrating our 80th anniversary in 2017. As an organization, we can trumpet our accomplishments knowing how strongly equipped we are to improve the health of wetlands across North America for the next generation.

The 21-state Great Lakes/Atlantic Region is a diverse landscape of habitats ranging from prairie potholes in the upper Midwest to coastal estuaries in the Atlantic Flyway, with Great Lakes marshes and riverine wetlands in between. Our region had a tremendous impact in 2016. We used private donations and public funds to invest \$29,049,039 on conservation projects. That strong support enabled our biologists and engineers to deliver focused, effective habitat conservation on 15,616 acres of wetlands.

Illinois is vital to the goals of our region and the country. The entire team in Illinois, including our volunteers, fundraising staff and conservation staff, has developed a winning strategy that helps waterfowl and anyone who enjoys clean water.

The work you see in this report is a snapshot of the conservation Ducks Unlimited achieves every day. We need and appreciate your support, as we build on this success for the next 80 years.

David Brakhage, GLARO Director of Operations

## ILLINOIS: BY THE NUMBERS

### 2016

- 11 projects
- 1,788.5 acres conserved
- \$912,113 invested

### HISTORICAL

- 468 projects
- 60,939 acres total conserved
- \$19,057,610 invested

For more information visit [www.ducks.org/illinois](http://www.ducks.org/illinois)

## MEET YOUR ILLINOIS CONSERVATION STAFF



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**Michael Sertle** joined Ducks Unlimited in 2007 and directs DU's conservation programs in Illinois and Indiana. An Illinois native, he received his bachelor's degree in Zoology from Western Illinois University and his master's degree in Waterfowl and Wetlands Ecology from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Prior to joining DU, Michael conducted waterfowl, wetlands and endangered species research throughout the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region. When not furthering DU's mission of waterfowl and wetlands conservation, he enjoys hunting, fishing and travelling with family and friends.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



GREAT LAKES & ATLANTIC REGION

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