

## National Wildlife Refuge Week / Amateur Radio

October 8-16, 2011

### Ohio River Islands NWR – W8IDW Operation

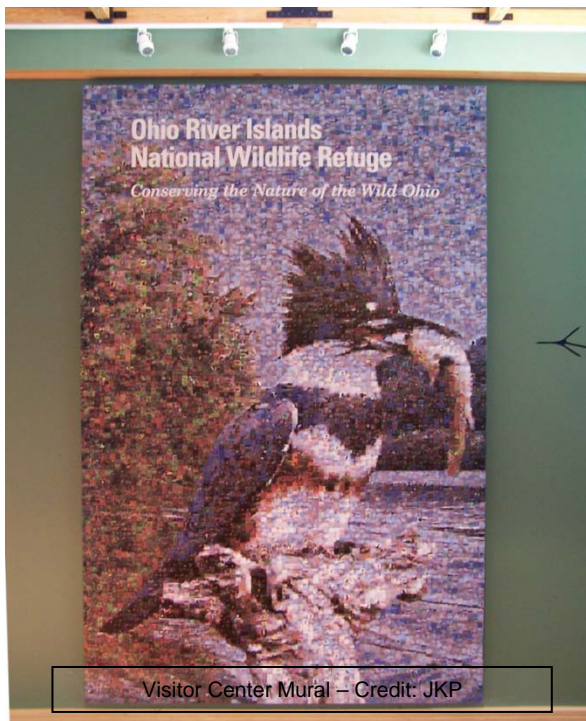


The Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge conserves the "wild Ohio" within one of our nation's busiest inland waterways. Established in 1990, the refuge extends along 362 miles of the upper Ohio River with 22 scattered islands and three mainland properties. The refuge works to protect wildlife and habitats native to the Ohio River and its floodplain. Migratory birds and endangered freshwater mussels are among the important wildlife emphasized on the refuge <sup>(1)</sup>.



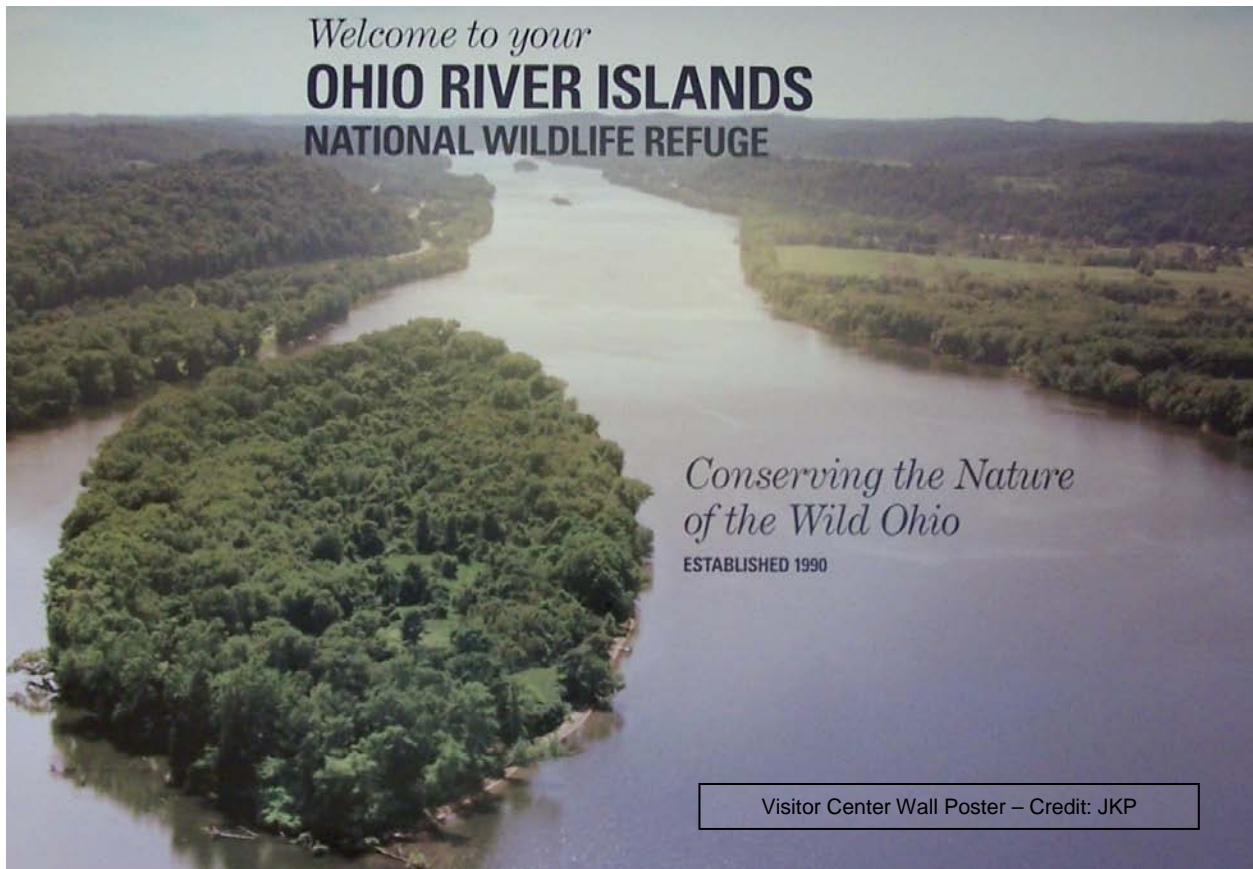
Lesage Island – Credit: Craig Stihler - USFWS

Recognizing the river's value to wildlife and the need to protect it, Congress established the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge in 1990. With help from The Nature Conservancy, the Service bought eight islands once owned by a sand and gravel company. Through willing-seller purchases and donations, the refuge has grown to include 22 islands and three mainland tracts. Most of the refuge lies within West Virginia, but Pennsylvania and Kentucky each hold two refuge islands. The 3,354 acres of land and underwater habitat that make up the refuge today represent a commitment to the future of wildlife and a tie to the “wild Ohio” that had all but disappeared <sup>(1)</sup>.



Visitor Center Mural – Credit: JKP

Visitors are welcome on the refuge. Refuge lands are open to the public from one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset, with emphasis on wildlife-dependent recreation. <sup>(1)</sup>



Complete information about the ORI-NWR can be found on the internet at the following location: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/ohioriverislands/>

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By chance, I happened to run across a website which linked to the [www.nwrweek-radio.info](http://www.nwrweek-radio.info) site about 3 weeks ago. Since I live only about 12 miles from the ORI-NWR, I decided it if I could get permission from the Refuge manager it would be a great excuse to pack up my portable equipment and get in some special event operating.

Early in the week of September 26, I spoke to the current Refuge Manager, Sara Siekierski and setup a meeting for the following Tuesday. The meeting with Sara and the Visitor Services director Jeremiah Hunter went quite well and both were very receptive to having a radio operation at the visitor center (seen in the photo above).

That evening I entered my operation information on the NWR Week website, having decided to operate the two Saturdays of the event – October 8 and 15. My operation showed up on the website the next day and that kicked off my planning in earnest.

Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> was forecast to be a gorgeous day and certainly turned out that way. The photo above shows the blue sky that dominated the entire operating period. After getting the Special Use and release paperwork out of the way, I began my station setup.

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(1) Courtesy of the National Wildlife Service.

It was decided that I would setup on the front porch of the center so I would be visible to any interested visitors. First priority was antenna setup. I had decided to setup two antenna systems. A Chameleon V11 multi-band horizontal dipole and a DX engineering home built NVIS 4-wire kit. I had previously used these two antennas while operating the Ohio State Parks on the Air contest in September.



DX Engineering NVIS



Chameleon V11

With the antenna setup out of the way, next priority was to get the station in place. By this time I was running about 40 minutes behind schedule for my 10 am proposed start time.

Portable table and bag chair went together first and then the other pieces out and connected. AC power was available on the wall just behind my operating position so a quick plug-in of my surge protector and I was in business.



### Station Components

Icom IC-7000 w/ hand mike  
SEC 1223 power supply  
LDG IT-100 tuner  
HP Netbook / Win7 oper. system  
AirLink Express software for PSK31  
Powered computer speaker  
Two position antenna switch  
Sharp 13 in Aquos LCD TV as Video monitor  
Paper logging supplies, radio manual, quick guide, etc.

A couple of notes regarding the IC-7000 which I like. A single cable mini to phono gets you video out to a larger monitor, which I wanted in case I had any interested visitor, they could readily see details of the radio display. See the operating position photo while I was running PSK.

A set of cables I found from [www.xggcomms.com](http://www.xggcomms.com) make digital operation a total breeze with this radio. Connect one cable from the radio's 13 pin DIN acc socket to the computer 'smart phone' jack via a 'Y' split cable that combines mic and phones into a single 4 conductor plug and you have instant sound card control. Plug the USB connector from the netbook to the radio remote jack to the computer smart phone jack and you have radio control from any computer software program. Set AirLink Express software to recognize the IC-7000 and you are in business for PSK, RTTY, etc.

[Send Steve (G8XGG) an email and he can advise you about cables for a variety of Icom and Yaesu radio models. Completely eliminates the tricky setup of other more complicated interface schemes.]

Around 11 am I got everything connected and the station actually on the air. A quick check of the bands for activity (unfortunately I did not have a reliable WIFI connection) and I started 'running' on 20 meters.

Contesting activity made it a bit of a challenge to operate on my preselected frequencies. I would like to express a general thank you to several PA hams who were working the PA QSO party and took time to listen to my brief special event comments when I worked them. Fine Business!

I did manage to log a couple each 20 meter PSK31 and 10 meter SSB contacts, but the predominant were on 40 meters. I worked one other NWR week station in Wisconsin and tried hard to work KØHL operating at Lake Ilo NWR - North Dakota, but no joy.

I worked a total of 24 stations over the 6 or so hours of operation. My planned operation for Saturday October 15, had to be cancelled due to the high winds associated with a cold front that passed the previous day. Wind and temporary antennas aren't a good mix.

I definitely have this event on my calendar for next year.

John Pitner – W8IDW