How YOU are helping Therkildsen to Thrive!

Thanks to your efforts, the University of Illinois Springfield’s Therkildsen Field Station at Emiquon (TFSE) provides a unique opportunity to involve students, educators, researchers, and the local community with a major habitat and wildlife restoration project. We are growing in support. For example, TFSE scholars and staff landed two National Science Foundation grants in 2013 to further its mission of education and outreach. However, your support is crucial in helping The Station grow in education and outreach. Here are some ways your donations have been put to work.

What’s happening at The Station?

Intercultural Education – This summer, high school students from U.S. urban locations will join Japanese students to explore Emiquon and the environment. The University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) has proudly enjoyed working cultural exchange between UIS and its Japanese sister city, Ashikaga, since 2000. This year, high school students from Ashikaga will join students from the Leaders for Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program. The LEAF program is sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and engages environmentally geared urban youth. Together, U.S. and Japanese students will work side by side to carry out field and lab studies at TFSE and on the UIS campus.

Funded Student Support - The Fred Therkildsen endowment funds supported three graduate student projects this year. Clayton Buss, Zach Dolbeare, and Melissa Benedict received scholarships helping to fund each student’s thesis research. Their work pertains to global climate change and restoration, and comparing aquatic ecology before and after restoration at Emiquon. Funds donated to the TFSE also supported Kaitlin Hollenbeck’s project of establishing at Emiquon a monarch way station, a place for these butterflies to stop off during migration.

Classes at TFSE - This fall, TFSE will offer Bio 111: Emiquon Stories to UIS first year undergraduates. Three UIS professors will highlight the science, social media and art associated with Emiquon, Dickson Mounds Museum, and the surrounding area to give a multifaceted understanding of this significant region. This summer, the online course, BIO333: 10,000 Years at Emiquon is being offered. This course explores the history, archaeology, biology and conservation aspects of the Emiquon, a wetland of international significance.

Sharing the Science of Emiquon – Each year, researchers, resource managers, and students from many disciplines gather at Dickson Mounds Museum to discuss the science of Emiquon at the annual Emiquon Science Conference. The conference opens dialogue about science and explores ideas and avenues for future work. This years conference covered topics ranging from Emiquon’s history, to changes in fish, plant, bird, and microbial communities in Thompson Lake.

Helping the Birds - Through a partnership between UIS and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, five osprey fledglings were reintroduced and their activities monitored in the Emiquon area. This summer, ten more osprey will be released at two sites with ten more released each year over a seven year span. Osprey (Pandion haliaetus) are endangered raptors in Illinois. TFSE supports this project by providing free lodging to the student researchers.

Our Partnership - - TFSE enjoys working with its Emiquon partners, as well as many local, state, and even international groups. Our primary Emiquon partners include The Nature Conservancy, Dickson Mounds Museum, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois River Biological Field Station, and Forbes Biological Station. The activities and interest of TFSE and its partners can be found described in detail at Experience Emiquon (www.experienceemiquon.com).

“It is an exceptional resource for both the university and the community…”

- Michael Cheney Ph.D.