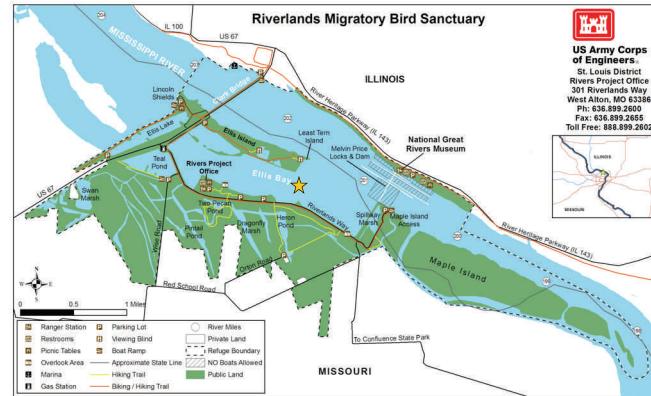


Project Timeline

- April 30, 2009 - Floating habitat anchored in Ellis Bay.
- May 14, 2009 - First reported sighting of least tern on the floating habitat.
- May 29, 2009 - Began regular monitoring and reporting of the habitat 5 days a week.
- June 19, 2009 - First least tern nest confirmed on the floating habitat.
- July 7, 2009 - Total of 12 nests documented. Initial nest had two hatchlings & one egg.
- July 24, 2009 - 19 hatchlings were collected, 10 of these were banded. An additional 16 eggs remained in 9 nests.
- Aug 6, 2009 - 10 hatchlings were banded. A total of 9 eggs remain.
- Aug 28, 2009 - Monitor notes that all terns have left the floating habitat for the season.
- Winter 2009-2010 - Assessment of success and future application.



Floating habitat is located in Ellis Bay at about Mississippi River Mile 201.7, within the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary.



US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
RIVERS PROJECT OFFICE
301 RIVERLANDS WAY
WEST ALTON, MISSOURI 63386
PHONE: 636-899-2600
FAX: 636-899-2655



September 2009



Interior Least Tern Floating Habitat Project



Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Project Background

- Interior Least Tern (LETE) is listed on the US Fish & Wildlife Service Endangered Species List.
- LETE historically nested on sandbars along the Mississippi River all the way up to Iowa.
- Loss of sandbar habitat due to navigation pools and flooding has resulted in LETE nesting occurring on the Mississippi River only south of St. Louis.
- A peninsula island was created at the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary in 2002 for LETE.
- Monitoring this island for several years showed no LETE nesting.



The project goal was to provide managed artificial sandbar habitat to this stretch of the Mississippi River. It was expected that this habitat would provide ideal nesting conditions for breeding Interior Least Terns.



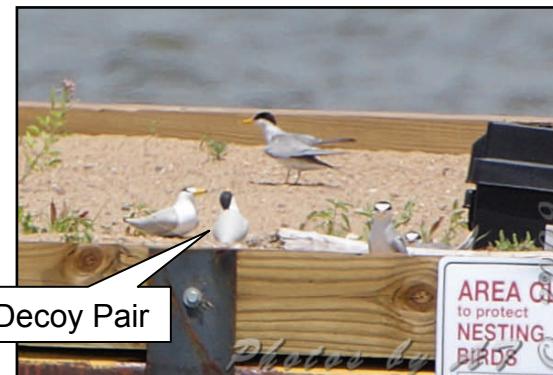
At left, the initial nest found on the project with 2 hatchlings and 1 egg.



At left, an LETE fledgling showing the banding combination used in the 2009 project.

Project Set-up

- Two pontoon dredge barges (18' x 48') were altered to hold approximately 5" of sand/gravel mix.
- Barges were lashed together to provide about 1,500 sq ft of nesting habitat.
- Drift wood was added for shading and protective covers.
- Conspecific attraction equipment used:
 - Call boxes ran intermittently 24 hours a day. These were powered by marine battery, recharged by solar panel.
 - 20 LETE decoys were also placed on floating habitat, most in pairs.



Monitoring & Banding

- Project was monitored 5 days a week by a National Great Rivers Research & Education Center Intern.
- Monitor observed mating rituals, decoy interaction, feeding of young, and colony defenses against potential avian predators.
- Band combination used was right leg US Fish & Wildlife Service metal band and left leg blue plastic band.
- Banding was conducted by Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Natural History Survey.

At right, the flight feathers of an LETE fledgling.

