

John Verdon Receives Richly Deserved Honorary Award

By Ric and Betty Zarwell

On February 6th John Verdon of Lansing, Iowa received the prestigious and infrequently given River Guardian Award from Kevin Foerster, Manager, and the entire staff of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. John is too modest to announce this about himself; therefore, two of his numerous admirers are doing this for him.

A man of exemplary fairness, honesty and integrity, John has been extremely dedicated to the mission and goals of the Friends of Pool 9 and the Refuge, as well as to the members of this organization, communities near Pool 9, and all who enjoy the Refuge.

John has been instrumental in building a productive citizen partnership with the Refuge which has fostered increased communications. With his typical long-range vision and gentle guidance, he has greatly increased public participation and the success of projects which contribute to the mission of the Refuge, and to the quality of life for local residents and visitors alike.

Very capably assisted by his wife, Phyllis, the Verdon's are an outstanding and highly dedicated team. Each of us should be thankful for the hard work of this team, and we owe it to them, and we especially owe it to each other, to carry on the important projects of the Friends of Pool 9 to the best of our abilities.



John and Phyllis Verdon, their three sons and daughters-in-law

Winston Churchill once wrote, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." John and Phyllis Verdon have definitely made a wonderful life by giving of themselves to others. There is a strong and positive lesson here that we can all learn from, and put into practice in our own lives.

John is a very humble individual, and attributes his personal success to the committed members of the Friends of Pool 9. He is a great leader and very deserving of this recognition. Deep and sincere congratulations, and thanks, to John and to his chief assistant, Phyllis.

By Tim Loose

John Verdon of Lansing, Iowa recently received the River Guardian Award from the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. John was recognized for his years of dedicated service with the Friends of Pool 9

John has lead the Friends of Pool 9, serving as its President, since its inception in 2006. He has been instrumental in building a productive citizen partnership with the Refuge which has fostered increased communication with Refuge staff and increased participation in projects which contribute to the mission of the Refuge. Tim Yager, District Manager of the McGregor District, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge reflected on John's contributions, "John is someone you can always count on to assist the Refuge with completing projects. No matter what the event, he is always there helping organize volunteers for river cleanups, wildlife surveys, and environmental education programs such as River Education Days and the Mississippi River Adventure Days. John is a very humble individual, and attributes his personal success to the committed members of the Friends of Pool 9. He is a great leader and very deserving of this recognition."

Under his leadership the Friends of Pool 9 have been recognized by the Governor of Iowa as the *Volunteer Group of the Year*. The group also received the *2007 Honor Roll*

Award from the Izaak Walton League of America, and most recently was recognized as the 2009 Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The River Guardian Award recognizes citizens who have demonstrated outstanding actions in the service to people and/or the resources of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.



Kevin Foerster, Refuge Manager of the Upper Mississippi River Complex presenting River Guardian award to John Verdon, President of the Friends of Pool 9