

Lake Michigan Volunteer AMBLE

Avian Monitoring for Botulism Lakeshore Events

Position Description: Volunteers are needed to monitor bird populations and beach conditions while they walk selected sections of Lake Michigan shoreline. Data collected on species and numbers of sick or dead birds will increase knowledge of avian botulism trends. Volunteers can also help minimize the negative effects of botulism on wildlife along their beach by burying carcasses. Designated volunteers will be on-call to collect some bird carcasses for submission to the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center for botulism testing. The Lake Michigan Volunteer AMBLE program is supported by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Season: June – November 2012. Walk assigned lakeshore every 7 – 10 days. Forming monitoring teams may help maintain a steady schedule.

Qualifications and Responsibilities:

1. Attendance of Lake Michigan Volunteer AMBLE training
2. Ability to walk at least a quarter mile section of beach every 7 – 10 days
3. Commitment to monitoring assigned shore for at least one season
4. Timely and consistent submission of data
5. Willingness to communicate with intrigued public

Training: Training will be provided free of charge by the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center staff. Information to be covered during training includes disease ecology of avian botulism (what causes it, which birds are affected, management recommendations), monitoring protocols, bird identification, and GPS use. Training sessions will be held in May and June and will take roughly half a day; volunteers need only to attend one session. For updates on training session locations and times visit www.nwhc.usgs.gov/AMBLE/.

Equipment: Volunteers will receive a resource kit during training that includes protocols, data sheets, bird identification guides, a clipboard, disposable gloves, plastic bags, and a U.S. Geological Survey volunteer hat or t-shirt. You provide binoculars, shovel, and optional digital camera. If you do not have a personal GPS unit, one can be loaned to you. Designated volunteer carcass shippers that will send specimens volunteer beach monitors deposit in state park freezers to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison will be provided with coolers, shipping supplies, and instructions.

Benefits: Develop a community with others in your area who care about lakeshore conditions, increase your understanding of avian botulism and Lake Michigan ecology, sharpen your birding skills, receive updates via a website and "AMBLE Ramble" newsletters, and go for walks along the Lake!

Next Step? Visit www.nwhc.usgs.gov/AMBLE/. Decide if you are willing to commit to at least one season of volunteer monitoring. If so, email Jenny Chipault at AMBLE@usgs.gov or call 608.270.2473 to sign up for a training session. See you there!

