



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

DECEMBER 2006 NEWSLETTER



Patriot takes flight over Dale Hollow Lake. Photo by Dave Treadway, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

### Rehabilitated bald eagle returns to home in the wild

Patriot, an adult female bald eagle named in honor of our military forces, was released back into the wild on Thursday, November 9, 2006, following a long rehabilitation. In January 2006, Cookeville, Tennessee Ecological Services Field Supervisor Lee Barclay received a telephone call from Andy Barlow of Overton County, a Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) Officer. Officer Barlow explained that Patriot had been found "addled" in a field, seemingly unable to fly. After receiving a veterinarian examination, Patriot was sent to the American Eagle Foundation for rehabilitation and possible reintroduction. Eleven months later, Patriot flew back into her home in the wild at Dale Hollow Lake in Clay County, Tennessee. Her victory flight was viewed by a crowd of elementary students, teachers, and employees of the American Eagle Foundation, TWRA, Corps of Engineers, and the Service.

*Submitted by Terry Hopkins, SCEP Employee, Ecological Services Field Office, Cookeville, TN*

### Wood stork tagging at Welaka National Fish Hatchery

The endangered southeast breeding population of wood storks is showing signs of recovery, and for the first time since the early 1960's, there were over 10,000 breeding pairs documented during the 2006 nest census surveys. To develop a population response model, survival estimates are needed for adults and young. The University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville is studying juvenile stork survival rates and movements by using satellite telemetry tags as the



Service biologist Bill Brooks holding adult wood stork with radio satellite tag. Photo by Allan Brown.

major research tool. To compliment this study and collect adult survival data needed to develop the population model, the Fish and Wildlife Service, The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, the Jacksonville Zoo, Disney Animal Kingdom and UF have placed satellite tags on 26 adult storks from Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi, Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia, Bear Island in South Carolina, Jacksonville Zoo in Florida, the Audubon Society's Corkscrew Sanctuary in Florida and now, Welaka National Fish Hatchery. Bill Brooks from the Service's Jacksonville Field Office, Larry Bryan of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, and employees from Welaka National Fish Hatchery used several pond draw downs to lure storks to the hatchery and, with a quick shot of a cannon net, captured six wood storks and fitted them with leg bands and radio transmitters. These birds can be tracked on [www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org) – go to the satellite tracking link and scroll down to the wood stork tags. The birds are numbered Welaka 1 thru Welaka 6 and will continue to provide tracking data for 7-10 years. In addition to the survival data, important foraging areas associated with colonies, colony site fidelity and non-breeding season movements will be documented.



Adult wood stork in cannon net. Photo by Allan Brown

*Submitted by Allan Brown, Welaka National Fish Hatchery, FL*

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## Behind the Scenes--



My daughter Melissa and I loved sharing this project with her classmates. Photo by Paula Boland, Mt. Bethel Elementary School.

### Second-graders learn about backyard treats for wildlife

On November 10, I visited my daughter Melissa's second grade class at Mt. Bethel Elementary School in Marietta, Georgia. With the Service's Backyard Habitat Exhibit in the background, we talked about animals in our yards and neighborhoods and what they need to survive. Then we smeared peanut butter on miniature bird houses and covered them with bird seed, sunflower seeds, shreaded wheat, and popcorn. Our bird house at home was devoured within two hours after hanging it outside. We also talked about recycling and how we could repeat this project over and over and over . . . .

Submitted by Ellen Marcus, External Affairs, Atlanta, GA



Katie Wallerhauser is proud of her awesome bird house. Photo by Paula Boland, Mt. Bethel Elementary School

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## Bragging Rights --



Teri Nallet performs a respirator fit test on Howard McCullough, forester at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, inside the tent. Photo by Sallie Gentry.

### Disaster Site Worker Course held at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

In mid-September, Brian Hardison, the Service's Southeast Regional safety manager, presented the first OSHA 7600 Disaster Site Worker Course at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The Course was attended by 11 Okefenokee NWR employees; SAC, Jim Gale; and Safety Specialist, Teri Nallet. Plans are underway to offer this 18-hour course at various sites within the Region. Current indications are that OSHA is going to require that, at least, supervisors on work crews who respond to emergency/disaster sites have completed this training. The subjects covered included information about the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS); Disaster Site Safety Hazards; Disaster Site Health Hazards; Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) Agents; Traumatic Incident Stress Awareness, Respiratory Protection, Other Personal Protective Equipment; Decontamination; DOI/FWS Policy Review; and Hurricane Response.

Submitted by Teri Nallet, Safety Specialist, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta, GA

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## Multi-agency exotics 'strike team' and volunteers treat invasive exotics at Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge

The Southeast Region's Invasive Species Strike Team participated in a multi-agency Brazilian pepper and other exotics eradication project at Coconut Point Sanctuary at Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge on November 1, 2006. Other agencies involved included Brevard County Parks and Recreation's Environmentally Endangered Lands or EEL program and The Nature Conservancy. In addition, four Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge volunteers assisted by hand-pulling Madagascar periwinkle, while the multi-agency 'strike team' focused on chain-sawing and treating large Brazilian pepper. The group covered approximately eight to 10 gross acres for the work day, and successfully treated approximately one acre of Brazilian pepper and 0.5 acres of Madagascar periwinkle. In addition, a few carrotwood and Guinea grass plants were treated. Monthly exotic work days are coordinated cooperatively by the Brevard County Parks and Recreation's EEL program and The Nature Conservancy.



Nichole Strickler, Brevard Co. - Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program, chain sawing Brazilian pepper prior to application of herbicide to cut stumps. Photo by William Thomas.



Mike Renda, The Nature Conservancy, applying herbicide to treated Brazilian pepper: 'groove 'n squirt' method. Photo by William Thomas.

*Submitted by William Thomas, J.N. 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, FL*

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## CoastFest kicks off National Wildlife Refuge Week in Coastal Georgia

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge partnered with the Brunswick Ecological Services Office to host a booth at the popular CoastFest, held in Brunswick, Georgia, on October 7. More than six thousand attendees paraded through dozens of booths sponsored by a variety of educational, environmental, and conservation organizations from the surrounding area. Participating organizations included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oatland Island Education Center, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the University of Georgia, and the Georgia Forestry Commission. Service staff set up an interactive learning exhibit that showcased the work of the Brunswick Ecological Services office and promoted National Wildlife Refuge Week. Kids of all ages and their parents enjoyed the festival, which also featured demonstrations of authentic Native American dancing, historic firearms, and the feisty antics of a very lively Blue Goose.



Strant Colwell of the Brunswick Ecological Services Office talks with a visitor about endangered species. Photo by Sallie Gentry.

*Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, GA*

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## The heat is on: Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge prepares for another prescribed burning season

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge is busy preparing for another prescribed burn season which generally begins in the fall and runs through mid-spring. Prescribed burns are management-ignited fires conducted under specified conditions for particular management objectives. Objectives range from reducing the vegetation available that could fuel an uncontrolled wildfire to removing shrubs that are encroaching on marshlands. The use of prescribed fire provides the refuge with a cost-effective tool for managing wildlife habitat for the benefit of healthy ecosystems that are best for people and wildlife. Prescribed burning is a highly effective management tool, but it is highly dependent on the weather. Every year the refuge selects more units for prescribed burning than it can achieve in order to have a variety of options available for what the weather dictates. Sometimes it will be too wet to burn the woods, but fire

staff will be able to burn in marsh. The predicted wind direction might push heavy smoke over a community if one unit were burned, but another unit can be burned without causing smoke impacts. Each unit has a unique set of conditions that must coincide to burn safely and effectively, including the right mix of equipment and personnel. A Burn Boss is never sure until the morning of a burn if the weather will be right or not. Because of this unpredictability, it is impossible for the refuge to say exactly when any given unit will be burned. The attached map is provided to alert visitors to which areas of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge may be burned between now and spring and subject to temporary closures during burning. In addition, fire personnel plan to burn three units on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. These units are on the west side of the highway and include the area from the north end of the island to the Visitor Center and from the end of South Pond to New Inlet. Questions or comments about the prescribed burning program at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge can be directed to Kelley Van Drueten at 252-473-1131 extension 235 or [kelley\\_vandrueten@fws.gov](mailto:kelley_vandrueten@fws.gov).

*Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island NWR, Manteo, NC*

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### Friends group shares cost of new ATV for Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge

Next sea turtle nesting season, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge will have a new ATV to patrol the beach thanks to their conservation partners along the Alabama Gulf Coast. The Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, a non-profit refuge support group, donated Adopt-A-Nest funds to the refuge in cooperation with Share the Beach, Alabama's sea turtle conservation program. The refuge used the funds to cost-share the purchase of a Polaris Ranger for sea turtle nest monitoring on the Fort Morgan Peninsula. Each summer, the refuge conducts surveys on a 13-mile stretch of beach, both on and off-refuge, with the help of more than 40 Share the Beach volunteers.



Representatives include (from l to r) Ralph Gilges, President, Friends of Bon Secour NWR, Mike Reynolds, Chairman, Share the Beach, and Jereme Phillips, Refuge Biologist, Bon Secour NWR. Photo by Ron Hollis.

*Submitted by Jereme Phillips, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Gulf Shores, AL*



Gail Carmody participates in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the greenhouse at Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Ecosystem Restoration Facility in Pensacola. Photo by Lorna Patrick.

### Service assists coastal partners in hurricane recovery of dune habitats

The Panama City, Florida Field Office, participated in the ribbon cutting of a new Florida Department of Environmental Protection greenhouse. Since Hurricane Opal (1995), coastal managers realized the need to quickly restore dune habitats with native plants. While sea oats are readily available commercially, other common species are not. Having a ready source of more species of plants helps stabilize threatened and endangered species' habitat from further erosion, provides a food source for wildlife, and restores rare coastal plant species affected by the storms. Hurricane funds from the Service and the Coastal Program have helped to support the establishment of this greenhouse.

*Submitted by Gail Carmody, Ecological Services Field Office, Panama City, FL*

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## Bat celebration at Vieques National Wildlife Refuge

While many children were trick or treating during Halloween, many Vieques kids were learning about their fascinating bats. Did you know that Vieques has insect, fruit and fish-eating bats? Our guest speaker, Carlos Diaz, Boqueron, Puerto Rico Ecological Services Field Office Assistant Field Supervisor, took time from his busy schedule to educate families, tourists, and staff about Vieques bats. Our visitors also had the opportunity to look at these native mammals during an evening visit to the refuge. Bats can be found on every part of the island, from lagoons and trees to abandoned munition storage bunkers. As refuge personnel continues spreading the good news about bats, many people are beginning to understand the stunning diversity of bats with which we share our island and to appreciate the great benefits we receive from them.



Guest Speaker Carlos Diaz, Volunteer Marta Melendez, Visitors Nelimar Peterson and daughter Neimar, and Gisella Burgos. Photo by Pauline Foster.

*Submitted by Gisella Burgos, Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, Vieques, PR*

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Maritza Colon at Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Cindy Mercado

## Office of Law Enforcement assists Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge in National Wildlife Refuge Week celebration

The staff and friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge in Florida hosted a celebration for National Wildlife Refuge Week on October 14, when the community participated in a fun-filled educational event. The Clermont Office of Law Enforcement assisted with an educational booth that presented both the legal and illicit trade of wildlife. The display included several items confiscated by Fish and Wildlife Special Agents and Wildlife Inspectors for import/export violations ranging from smuggling and a host of other import offenses. The staff distributed the pamphlet entitled "Buyer Beware . . . Facts about Federal Wildlife Laws" and wildlife coloring books. Being part of the event was special and hearing the adamant voices of the younger children expressing how they will grow up and make a difference in protecting wildlife was priceless.

*Submitted by Cindy Mercado, Clermont Office of Law Enforcement, FL*

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## Sturgeon hunters

Service personnel from Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery in Tupelo, Mississippi, Welaka National Fish Hatchery in Florida, the Daphne, Alabama, Ecological Services Field Office, Eglin Air Force Base, and 26 volunteers assisted Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office staff this fall on the Escambia River in Florida. Participants netted Gulf sturgeon as they migrated from the freshwater to overwinter in the marine environment. A houseboat anchored at the netting site provided a base of operations and living quarters for people conducting the dawn to dark operation. More than 130 Gulf sturgeons, weighing from 1 to 47 pounds, were collected and processed during the four-week study. The Gulf sturgeon is a listed species and knowledge of its distribution and relative abundance are important components in evaluating the success of recovery and management program.



Gabby Saluta, Environmental Careers Organization associate, with "Catch of the Day."

*Submitted by Frank Parauka, Panama City Ecological Services Field Office, FL*



Big Boy. Volunteers Joni Barreda.



Volunteer Don Berryhill teaches children about carnivorous plants of the Okefenokee. Photo by Folkston Elementary School.

### Third-graders experience wild things of the Okefenokee

When tight budgets prevent students from visiting our national wildlife refuges, the national wildlife refuge visits the students. On November 6, the entire third grade (117 students) of Folkston Elementary School had the opportunity to experience Wild Things of the Okefenokee, when staff and volunteers from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge worked with educators to host an in-school field trip. The program covered endangered species, animals and habitat of the Okefenokee, how biologists and foresters monitor their surroundings, and the many ways of enjoying the outdoors.

“Each of these topics incorporated one or more of the state’s required competencies, such as math, writing skills, and science,” said Refuge Environmental Education Coordinator Blaine Eckberg. “Our goal was to excite the children in looking more closely and understanding the importance of their natural surroundings. We had

children hike along an ‘upland trail’ and write about what they encountered, then the children took a virtual canoe trip through the Okefenokee, using real paddles, and learned about the plants and wildlife they encountered along the way,” said Refuge Biologist Sara Aicher.



Volunteer Jane Shannon teaches children about woodpecker diversity and adaptations. Photo by Folkston Elementary School.

*Submitted by Shawn Gillette, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, GA*



Two pillow cases with 471 eggs found in driveway. Photo by William Calvert.

### Florida man convicted of unlawful possession of loggerhead sea turtle eggs

A man who was arrested for digging up loggerhead sea turtle eggs on Juno Beach more than two years ago, was convicted of the federal offense on October 30. Alvin G. Keel, West Palm Beach, who was convicted by U.S. District Judge Daniel T. K. Hurley in a one-day trial of the unlawful possession of Loggerhead sea turtle eggs, in violation of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1538, and the unlawful transportation of sea turtle eggs, in violation of the Lacey Act, 16 U.S.C. 3372. He faces a maximum penalty of six years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines. A sentencing date has not been set. According to trial testimony and other court filings, Keel was seen digging up nests of freshly laid loggerhead sea turtle eggs on Juno Beach around midnight on June 4, 2004. Shortly after his

arrest, law enforcement officers discovered a large bag containing two pillow cases filled with 471 sea turtle eggs in a vacant lot 600 yards north of where Keel was arrested. Law Enforcement Officer William Calvert, stationed at the ARM Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Boynton Beach, Florida investigated and prosecuted the case with Assistant United States Attorney Lauren Jorgensen. This is Keel's fifth arrest on federal charges involving the taking and transportation of sea turtle eggs. Keel has also been arrested and prosecuted numerous times by the state of Florida for the same offense. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by David Underwood, ARM Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach, FL*

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## U.S. Navy partners with refuge staff to rebuild Swamp Island Boardwalk

In November, four members of the U.S. Navy's Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 202 (CBMU 202), from the Kingsbay Naval Submarine Base in southeast Georgia, assisted staff and volunteers at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in replacing more than 850 feet of a boardwalk. Seaman Second Class David Ribet assisted in removing old and worn boards, inspecting posts and stringers, and installing new boards. "We're Seabees, so we are used to working in some pretty wild places, but this place has to be one of the wildest I've seen," said Ribet, as he stood knee-deep in swamp muck. The team had to hike a half-mile just to reach the work area, then assist with removal of old boards, rusted nails, and other debris. At the end of each day, the team was physically exhausted and their uniforms dirty and torn, but all five agreed that it was worth the effort, because they know that their work will be enjoyed by countless thousands for many years to come.



Construction Team: standing (L to R): David Ribet, Refuge Volunteer, John Wilson, David Standard, Jack Webb. Sitting: Brandon Blanton, Terneeshia Black, Derick Brown, Refuge Employee Everette Silkes. FWS Photo.

*Submitted by Shawn Gillette, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, GA*

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Tommy Ogilvie, Ford Chancellor, Tim Ross, and Caitlin G. B. Laughlin. Photo by Douglas Hunt.

## Volunteers spruce up Southeast Louisiana Refuges

Four young volunteers from the from the Utah Conservation Corps, through the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, spent five weeks at the Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex in Lacombe, Louisiana recently. The first week was spent in preparation for our annual wildlife refuge week celebration, Wild Things. The next week, Caitlin G. B. Laughlin, Ford Chancellor, Tim Ross, and Tommy Ogilvie got a taste of the varied work that occurs on a refuge complex. They painted offices, cleared red-cockaded woodpecker trees, cleared survey trails, built an overlook and a variety of other chores. Their efforts and antics will be long remembered at Southeast Louisiana Refuges.

*Submitted by Douglas Hunt, Southeast Louisiana Refuges, Lacombe, LA*

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## Hats Off --



## Partnership bolsters red-cockaded woodpecker population

Before dawn on a foggy October morning, biologists slipped through the low vegetation amongst towering longleaf pines to release a pair of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*) that were carefully placed in artificial cavities only hours before. With the screens removed, the very vocal pair proceeded to forage, peck, and posture around the bole of a tree as they discovered one another in their new habitat. On the eve of October 19, 2006 a team of federal biologists gathered at Fort Benning, Georgia, to capture six juvenile red-cockaded woodpeckers for translocation to the Talladega National Forest near Heflin, Alabama. The birds were meticulously verified and recorded and placed in carrying boxes for a three-hour trip to the north. Hours later, in the company of several media representatives, including ESPN2 and the Birmingham News, the birds were released. While the

actual release of the birds can garner the most attention, the work actually began several months earlier. A major partnership has developed between the Service, Southern Company, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The partnership, fueled by Southern Company's Power of Flight Program, provides funding for a Service RCW biologist. This biologist monitors and bands nestling RCWs, which is a critical step in making them available for translocation. With little fanfare, similar events play out across the Southeast every fall and winter. Translocation of juvenile woodpeckers continues to be a powerful tool for increasing numbers of RCWs, particularly in those critically small populations that would likely expire without intervention.

*Submitted by Eric Spadgenske, Daphne Ecological Services Field Office, AL*

**Regional Director Hamilton, Migratory Bird Division representatives honored as Auburn University retires golden eagle mascot**

After four seasons of flight, the 26-year-old golden eagle, Tiger, was retired from flying at Auburn University home football games on Saturday, November 11. The day began with "Breakfast with Tiger" at the Southeastern Raptor Center followed by a special police and fire truck escort transporting Tiger and Service representatives to Jordan-Hare Stadium. University officials retired the school's famed eagle during a pre-game ceremony prior to the Auburn vs. University of Georgia game. Regional Director Sam Hamilton and representatives from the Migratory Bird Program, Carmen Simonton and Michelle Outlaw, were recognized and received letters from University President,



Chris Morris, volunteer with Auburn's Southeastern Raptor Center, holds eagle. Photo by Clay Hamilton.

Edward Richardson, formally thanking the Service for their support and assistance to the Southeastern Raptor Center, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Auburn University. Tiger has served as War Eagle Six since 1986 and has flown before home football games. Tiger also flew during the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. The educational benefit of these pre-game flights is obvious as the entire stadium heralds Tiger's flight with a rousing cheer. In addition, the Auburn Football Program features an article on eagles including the Service's role in eagle conservation. At halftime, Auburn University presented 6-year-old Nova as Tiger's successor to continue the tradition of celebrating the strength and inspiring nobility of eagles.



L to R: Dr Timothy Boosinger, Dean of Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Sam D. Hamilton, Southeast Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carmen Simonton and Michelle Outlaw of the Service's Migratory Birds Division, Dr. Ed Richardson, President of Auburn University, and an unidentified person. Photo by Clay Hamilton.

*Submitted by Emily Jo Williams, Migratory Birds, Atlanta, GA*



Service Director Dale Hall with a Puerto Rican parrot. Photo by Pablo Torres.

**Puerto Rican parrot release at the Rio Abajo Commonwealth Forest**

On Sunday, November 19, Puerto Rican Parrots were reintroduced to the Rio Abajo Commonwealth Forest, an area where the species has been absent for the last 100 years.

" It has been a long journey that started in 1993 in Parque Del Este in the Dominican Republic when we first released Hispaniola Parrots raised in Rio Abajo as a form of test. We later released Puerto Rican Parrots in El Yunque, and we learned a lot from those experiences. Tomorrow we come to a full circle. I was present at Parque del Este, and I was so excited to see those birds fly. How I felt then is second to how I will feel tomorrow when I see the Puerto Rican Parrot fly in Rio Abajo," said Service Director Dale Hall in a press conference the day before the event. "This is important because it is about pride and love. The love that has been invested in caring for these animals, the pride that we all feel."

The release itself was conducted early Sunday morning, at 6:45 a.m. when staff from the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental

Resources opened a side panel of the release cage that was home for 22 parrots for the last two years. Around five minutes latter the first parrot exited the cage and was quickly out of sight. The second parrot exited thirty seconds latter. It wasn't until almost two hours latter that parrots in the cage got active again and from 9: a.m. until 11 a.m. more parrots flew out individually. One of the parrots perched at the entrance of the cage decided to go back into the cage.

Once in the wild, the parrots vocalized intensely and perched on nearby vegetation. Some parrots came back to the release area and walked on top of the cage. One parrot outside the cage made physical contact with a parrot that was still inside the cage. Both parrots touched each other's beaks and exchanged vocalization. As of 2 p.m., none of the parrots had reentered the cage and a group of parrots remained inside.

While activities were coming to an end, Regional Director Sam Hamilton and Dale Hall met with the Ecological Services staff to express their appreciation for the hardwork done to make the release a success. Hamilton and Hall also got a chance to visit the almost completed new Puerto Rican Parrot Aviary located at the Caribbean National Forest and slated for inauguration in March 2007.

*Submitted by Lilibeth Serrano, Boqueron Ecological Services Field Office, PR*

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### **Dale Hall and Sam Hamilton visit National Wildlife Refuges in Puerto Rico**

After the Puerto Rican parrot release, Service Director Dale Hall and Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton visited the Cabo Rojo National Wilife Refuge where they saw some of the early construction for a new Office and Visitor Center. They also met the Cabo Rojo Friends Group and visited the Interpretative Center operated on the refuge by the group. While surveying the Salt Flats area, Sam and Dale saw several endangered yellow shouldered blackbirds.



*Vieques National Wildlife Refuge staff, Sam Hamilton, and Dale Hall. US FWS Photo.*

At the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, they visited ongoing construction for a new residence and a maintenance shop. They also received updates on the cleanup of the Vieques Superfund Site, met with staff, and met TICATOVE, a new organization in Vieques dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles.

Sam had a chance to individually visit the construction site for the new office at the Culebra National Wildlife Refuge. In Culebra, he also met with the exiting refuge manager, Teresa Tallevast, and discussed the ongoing cleanup of unexploded ordnance with personnel of the Army Corps of Engineers.

*Submitted by Lilibeth Serrano, Boqueron Ecological Services Field Office, PR*

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## ***Photo Album --***

### **Photo of the Month**

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia is renowned for its alligators. However, there are many instances where people come into close contact with the gators without realizing the danger to themselves and the stress that it can place on the animals. "One of the most common questions that we get in the Visitor Center at Okefenokee NWR is "Are the alligators real?" Honest, we didn't pose the alligator with the new sign.



Photo by Sallie Gentry, Refuge  
Ranger, Okefenokee National  
Wildlife Refuge.

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**Disaster Site Worker Course held at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge -- one more photo**



Russ Langford of Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge wears a blue Level C suit. Photo by Sallie Gentry.



**Florida man convicted of unlawful possession of loggerhead sea turtle eggs -- more photos**



471 sea turtle eggs. Photo by William Calvert.



Alvin Keel. Photo by William Calvert.



Researcher looking at the nest where the eggs were taken. Photo by William Calvert.



# Visitor Services --

## Family Fishing Festival held at Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery



Father and son pose with son's big catch for the day! Photo taken by Crystal Thomas, Program Assistant, USFWS.

The Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery in Suches, Georgia, held its 5th annual Family Fishing Festival on Saturday, September 23, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. More than 750 people attended this event. About 250 youths, aged 16 and under, registered for the free, fun-filled day of fishing on Rock Creek, where approximately 2,500 beautiful rainbow trout were stocked especially for the event.

In addition to fishing, youth participated in a scavenger hunt, visiting educational/environmental exhibit booths sponsored by more than a dozen different agencies. Upon completion of the scavenger hunt, youths received a free t-shirt sponsored by more than 30 local individuals and businesses through the Hatchery's Friends Group. Families were also treated to lunch which was prepared and served by Trout Unlimited number 692 of Blairsville. Food and a grill were provided by United Community Bank. Drinks were provided by Coca-Cola of Jasper.

The Friends Group held a duck race and gave away prizes donated by the Friends Group and Appalachian Community Bank. Prizes provided by the Modern Day Robin Hood, which included Realtreecaps, were given away by random drawings from registration forms. This event was made possible by the generosity of local businesses

and agencies and the loyal dedication of the more than 50 volunteers who assisted with pre- and post-event activities.



Excited crowd observes as the ducks make their way down Rock Creek during the duck race held by the Hatchery's Friends Group. Photo taken by Crystal Thomas, Program Assistant, USFWS.

*Submitted by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, GA*

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# Wage Grade Profile --

## Service employees accomplish Vieques demolition project, enjoy Caribbean



David McCaghren, Dewayne Sanders, and Doug Mason. FWS

In early May, I received an e-mail asking if I wanted to go to a tropical island paradise and spend a few weeks with a couple of good friends. Of course I said yes, and on May 21, until June 2, I worked at Vieques National Wildlife Refuge in the Caribbean.

Working with me were Dwayne Sanders from Ace Basin National Wildlife Refuge, in Hollywood, South Carolina and Doug Mason from Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in McBee, South Carolina.

The three of us destroyed the old buildings abandoned by the Navy when they transferred

Vieques to the Service and hauled the trash to the landfill. Thanks to a lot of hard work by Refuge and Regional Office staff, the rental machinery required to do the job was shipped to Vieques. Before we started the project, we did a risk assessment of each of the old buildings, including electrical wires and honey bees. Dwayne's first project was to tear down the old jailhouse or brig. Doug and I cut a new road to the landfill from the refuge's boundary. We also repaired a few spots on the refuge road so the dump trucks could make it up and down some hills.

Besides all our hard work and long days, we enjoyed some snorkeling and fishing and a dinner with Regional Director Sam Hamilton and the area supervisor at the Trade Winds restaurant, a great seafood place.



Doug Mason operates a front end loader dumping trash into a dump truck. Photo by David McCaghren.

*Submitted by David McCaghren, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, AL*