



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

DECEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

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Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center construction underway

Construction of the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge's and the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's joint, "green" headquarters began with an official groundbreaking ceremony on October 30. The Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center will be located on the National Wildlife Refuge in Moss Point, Mississippi.

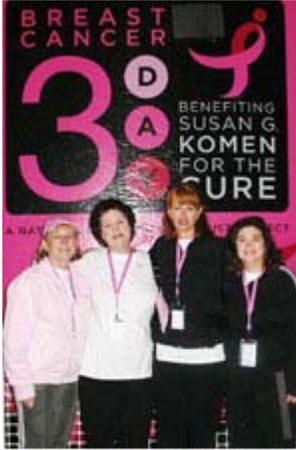
Groundbreaking ceremony: Those handling the shovels include Complex Manager, Lloyd Culp, Mississippi Representative Frank Hamilton, a representative from U.S. Senator Thad Cochran's office, Bill Walker of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. FWS Photo.

The new building will receive 'Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Certification' -- leading the area in representing the feasibility of sustainable construction with daylight and rainwater harvesting. The 16,000-square-foot facility will have office space, classrooms, an exhibit area, a dormitory and laboratories. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

The facilities are anticipated to be nationally recognized for research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community. Several rare plant and animal species use the refuge and the adjacent reserve, including gopher tortoises and red-cockaded woodpeckers. Pine savannah and tidal marsh comprise portions of the landscape, providing incredible research opportunities.

Submitted by Emily Neidigh, Gulf Coast NWR Complex, Gautier, Mississippi

Behind the Scenes--



Judy Barnes, Phyllis Owens, Janet Steele, and Lyne Askins are "Friends 4 Life" after walking 60 miles together in the Breast Cancer 3-Day. FWS Photo.

Lyne Askins walks in Breast Cancer 3-Day in Atlanta

Lyne Askins, refuge manager of Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, participated in the 2007 Atlanta Breast Cancer 3-Day benefiting the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. Lyne was part of team "Friends 4 Life," organized by Judy Barnes, small game biologist for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Judy is a seven-year breast cancer survivor and in honor of her 60th birthday, she invited her three closest friends to walk 60 miles with her in the Atlanta 3-Day event, held October 12-14. The other team members were Janet Steele of Fort Mill, South Carolina, and Phyllis Owens of Memphis, Tennessee. The team walked 20 miles each day through Alpharetta, Duluth, Buckhead, and points in between, with a triumphant finish on Sunday in Piedmont Park in Midtown Atlanta. Team "Friends 4 Life" raised more than \$9,000 for the philanthropic foundation. In total, the 2,900 walkers raised more than \$6.6 million dollars for breast cancer treatment and research.

Submitted by Patricia McCoy, Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, McBee, South Carolina

Bragging Rights --



Biology intern Ingrid Kobler and senior firefighter Rebecca Goosman man the booth. FWS Photo.

Gautier Mullet Festival a success

The 17th annual Gautier Mullet Festival was held on Saturday, October 20, 2007 at the historic estate La Maison Gautier with a "Celebrating Our Coastal Heritage" theme. Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex staff participated in the event with a booth about prescribed fire and wildlife biology, most particularly the endangered Mississippi sandhill cranes. Visitors learned about banding and radio telemetry, the Complex's fire program and about the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Mullet Festival is an important event that celebrates living on the coast. Being a part of these events helps the Refuge Complex communicate support of being part of the coastal heritage and promoting wildlife in the area. Thousands of people visit the festival each year, making it an incredible opportunity to increase public support and understanding of the Service's mission.

Submitted by Emily Neidigh, Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Gautier, Mississippi

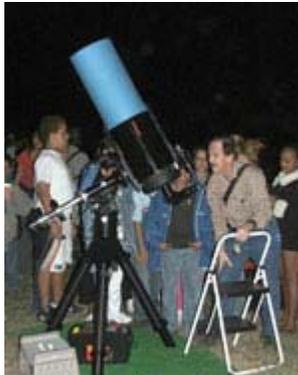
Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery wins award for environmental education efforts

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery was recently awarded the Environmental Education Project of the Month for October 2007 from the Eastern Kentucky Personable Responsibility in the Environment (PRIDE) organization. Through the efforts of both the hatchery and the local Russell County Soil Conservation District, the two organizations were able to organize and host the first ever Outdoor Conservation Adventure Day for all of the county's fifth graders. A non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the environment, PRIDE was honored and excited to present the October award to the two organizations for their efforts.



Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick poses with Eastern Kentucky PRIDE Education Director Jennifer Johnson and fellow award recipient Jennifer Hardwick of the Russell County Soil Conservation District. Photo by Sarah Gilbert.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky



Participants waiting to view the night sky. FWS Photo.

Vieques community explores the refuge's night skies and bats

On a clear evening, October 20, hundreds of stars sparkled in the dark sky above the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. It was a perfect evening for an adventurous sky exploration. Girls Scouts, families, and amateur astronomers burst into a roar of "oohs" and "aahs" when viewing the moon, constellations, and planets through huge astronomical telescopes. Amazed by the spectacular views, visitors appreciated having a pollution-free refuge for the benefit of people and wildlife.

On October 27, refuge staff hosted another educational journey. This time it wasn't sparkling, but spooky. Carlos Diaz, Biologist from the Boqueron, Puerto Rico Ecological Services Field Office presented the fishing bat, fruit bat, and the free-tailed bat. The audience was thrilled. After this educational experience, visitors had an opportunity to decorate their bat masks. If you are interested in decorating a bat mask, please see [Photo Album](#).

By Gisella Burgos, Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico

Student interns at Pocosin Lakes help host Wildlife Field Day

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge hosted four college interns this summer. The interns included Kerri Citterbark from College of William and Mary, Susan Gullett from Campbell University, Nadia Hossounah from North Carolina State University, and Betsy Larcom from Pennsylvania State University. The interns were responsible for banding wood ducks, maintaining wood duck nest boxes, collecting wood duck productivity data, mapping invasive species, and creating and presenting weekly outreach programs for local children and the public. One of the highlights of the summer was the Wildlife Field Day for local children hosted August 2, 2007. The interns coordinated with partners, and created and presented four environmental education booths. The booths included "furs and feathers of wildlife occurring on the refuge," "animal signs and plaster paris track making," "all about frogs," "native plants in



Nadia Hossounah and Jay Stanton (son of Wendy and John Stanton) banding a wood duck. FWS Photo

the area and making plant book markers," " how wildlife is connected to their habitat - with a habitat-fishing booth activity," "all about food webs booth," a snack booth," and a "receive a blue goose tattoo booth." Also featured were the International Wolf Display inside the Walter B. Jones Center for the Sounds, and a refuge video in the auditorium. When the children arrived, they were divided into groups. The groups were rotated around the environmental education booths every 15 minutes. As a grand finale, the interns wrote a five-minute play about the role National Wildlife Refuges provide for wildlife. The interns wrote the play, designed and made the animal costumes, acted in the play, and recruited wildlife biologist Wendy Stanton to represent the refuge. The play was a big hit. The interns did an outstanding job, and the children had a fun, educational day at the refuge. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Wendy Stanton, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Columbia North Carolina



Students stop to enjoy Dale, the animatronic robot, who is part of the Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Dale is dressed to resemble a hatchery employee and interprets a quick overview of trout production at the hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosts Outdoor Conservation Adventure Day

Thursday, October 18, was a busy day of fun, outdoor learning at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery as its staff served as co-organizer and host for the first ever Outdoor Conservation Adventure Day. The event was designed as a way for all the local fifth grade students from Russell County, Kentucky to come to the hatchery and learn about a variety of outdoor related topics. Stations ranged from tours of the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center to water and soil quality to fishing at hatchery creek. More than 50 teachers, volunteers, presenters and hatchery staff went into making the day a resounding success, and with such positive feedback from all teachers, the event is already marked to become an annual one.



Fishing at hatchery creek was a favorite of the 250 students attending the first ever Outdoor Conservation Adventure Day at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky



Female RCW. Photo by Eric Spadgenske.

Red-cockaded woodpeckers translocated to private land in Alabama

Another chapter in Alabama conservation history was recently opened when, for the first time ever, red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCWs) were moved onto private land in Alabama in an effort to rescue a remnant population of this endangered species. After more than a year in the planning phase, biologists from the Alabama Forest Resources Center, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Fort Benning Conservation Branch, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service successfully translocated seven juvenile RCWs from Fort Benning,

Georgia to Enon Plantation in southeastern Alabama.

Several months of planning, coordination, and field work culminated in a few moments of anticipation and excitement as the birds were released from their new roost cavities. Each bird quickly joined its



Installing artificial cavities. Photo by Eric Spadgenske.

prospective mate in exploring the beautiful, open pine landscape of Enon Plantation. This early success is a tribute to the dedication and commitment of all of the partners involved. Biologists from the Alabama Field Office will continue to monitor the RCW population at Enon and look forward to future translocation successes.

Submitted by Eric Spadgenske, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office



A footer is secured as ACCA cave fence designer/builder, Roy Powers, describes the next step to a TDEC intern. Photo by David Pelren.

Bellamy Cave fence re-built to protect gray bat habitat

The summer of 2007 was another good one for conservation of cave resources in Tennessee. An eight-foot-high fence was built around the entrance to Bellamy Cave through cooperation of the Fish and Wildlife Service and various partners. This Montgomery County, Tennessee, cave is home to over 100,000 endangered gray bats. The previous chain-link fence around the site was aging, allowing trespassers easy access to the cave. Protection of the habitat used by several bat species, cave fish, and blind crayfish will be a great improvement as a result of the fencing project.

This effort was occurred through design and construction of the fence by the American Cave Conservation Association (ACCA) in cooperation with a variety of groups such as the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). Additional protection of the tract occupied by the cave was recently enhanced through the purchase of the property by The Nature Conservancy. Ownership of the cave has been transferred to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, which is developing plans for construction of a viewing area to be used during evening emergencies of gray bats.



The fence progresses as expanded metal sheets are welded into place. Photo by David Pelren.

Submitted by David Pelren, Cookeville, Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office



Cape Romain's Lighthouse Island. Photo by Patricia Lynch.

Refuge volunteers visit Cape Romain's historic Lighthouse Island

On November 4, Cape Romain Refuge volunteers went on an outing to Lighthouse Island, a refuge barrier island located seven miles off the mainland and within the refuge Wilderness Area. There are two lighthouses on the island, a 65-foot tower built in 1827 and a 150-foot tower built in 1857. Before boarding the refuge concessionaire's Island Cat ferry, Tommy Graham, a refuge volunteer for 20 years, gave a slide presentation on the island's history, sharing his knowledge, old photographs, and nautical charts. Upon reaching the island, folks donned boots or rolled up their pants and walked through high water and pluff mud to reach the small path leading to the lights. Although the visitors were unable to enter the 1857 lighthouse, the 1827 lighthouse was open, and volunteers walked inside and viewed the

inner structure. Outside the structures, Graham pointed out a fresh water cistern and the foundation remains of the lightkeeper's house. For the volunteers, it was a day to delve into the rich cultural history of the refuge as well as enjoy a beautiful wilderness experience! More photos in [Photo Album](#).



EcoWeb at "Gifts of the Forest Station." Photo by Michelle Johnson, South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Sewee Center hosts Wood Magic Forest Fair

For a week in October, Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center hosted an environmental education program for 720 fourth-grade students on the sustainable management of forest resources. The South Carolina Forestry Commission with many partners annually sponsors Wood Magic Forest Fair at Sewee and two other locations across the state of South Carolina. Each day, 140 students were guided through five different stations, learned about management techniques used to ensure long-term sustainability, and discovered the many environmental, social and economic benefits of forests. At the stations, which included "Board Cuttin," "Bad Fire, Good Fire," "Gifts of the Forest," and

"Makin Paper," students learned how lumber is made, the forester's use of prescribed fire, forest benefits, and the importance of recycling to save landfill areas. The Magic Show summarizes all the classes and emphasizes how long it takes trees to grow and how many forest products students use every day. The students leave with a good understanding of the renewable and non-renewal resources and the reduce-reuse-recycle principles of conservation. For more information on this outstanding education program and the combined sponsorship, visit the Wood Magic Forest Fair website at <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/woodmagic.htm>



Smokey Bear helps out. Photo by Michelle Johnson, South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Submitted by Becky Ashley, Francis Marion National Forest, Sewee Visitor Center, Awendaw, South Carolina



Warren Lorentz, FWS, in back and Kate Konschnik, USDOJ, navigate Choccolocco Creek. Photo by Roger Heim.

Partnerships, stewardships, professionalism and science defined at the Anniston PCB Natural Resource Damage Assessment site

During the week of November 5, 2007, the Natural Resources Damage Assessment case manager for the Anniston PCB Site Located in Anniston, Alabama, hosted the second canoe trip of Choccolocco Creek. The purpose of the trip, held at the request of the Department of Justice, was to provide participants with a greater understanding of how the Service's trust resources at the site have been affected by PCBs. Representatives have included scientists and attorneys from EPA; USGS; the Department of Justice; the Technical Special master to the Courts; and staff from the Service's Washington, Southeast Regional Office, Alabama, and Georgia Ecological Services Field Offices. The Trustees for this case have estimated NRDA damages at this site as ranging from \$300 to \$600 million.

More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Warren Lorentz, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office, Daphne, Alabama

Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex participates in 18th annual Beach Sweep

Bayou Sauvage and Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuges participated in the annual Louisiana Beach Sweep and the inland Waterway Cleanup on Saturday, September 15, 2007. The event was in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy.



Volunteers from National Wildlife Federation and the U.S. Coast Guard with some of the trash collected at Beach Sweep on Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Pon Dixon.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has designated areas for cleanup which included Orleans and St. Tammany Parishes. Bayou Sauvage and Big Branch Marsh fall within the parishes designated for cleanup. A total of thirty-five volunteers and four refuge staff participated in the Lake front cleanup on Big Branch Marsh Refuge to remove a total of 1,400 pounds of trash. On Bayou Sauvage thirty-eight volunteers and three refuge staff removed more than 16,000 pounds of debris.

Bayou Sauvage and Big Branch National Wildlife Refuges along with Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges Inc. were three of the nine Beach Sweep sponsors.

Submitted by Shelley Stiaes, Bayou Sauvage/Breton/Delta National Wildlife Refuges, Lacombe, Louisiana

Hats Off --



Secretary Kempthorne presents Cooperative Conservation Awards to two partners in Florida. Photo by Dick Georgen.

Secretary of Interior Kempthorne presents Cooperative Conservation Award to Florida partners

Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne awarded the U.S. Department of the Interior's highest honor, the Cooperative Conservation Award, to the Florida Department of Environmental Conservation (DEP) Bureau of Invasive Plant Management Program (BIPM) and to the Florida Keys Invasive Exotic Task Force (FKIETF). Greg Jubinsky, Environmental Administrator, BIPM and Alison Higgins, Chairperson FKIETF accepted the awards on behalf of their Teams.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award recognizes conservation achievements that involve collaborative activity among a diverse range of entities, including federal, state, local and tribal governments, private for profit and non-profit institutions, and other non-governmental entities and individuals.

The DEP was honored for establishing and incorporating science-based ecosystem management concepts into field and on-the-ground operations. A collaborative effort between BIPM, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the program has helped control more than 250,000 acres of upland weeds in 105 locations, dedicating \$8.5 million in the state of Florida for this effort. An article in the Summer 2007 Wildland Weeds, a publication of the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council, highlighted these innovative approaches and accomplishments.



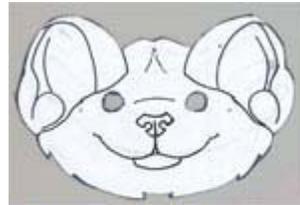
Florida partners with Sam D. Hamilton, Southeast Regional Director. Photo by Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle.

The Florida Keys Invasive Task Force is composed of over 22 member organizations leading the way in Florida with a collaborate approach, as invasive exotic plants know no boundaries. Pilot programs involving outreach to private landowners, developing cooperative partnerships to pool resources and funding, new ordinances, tax breaks, and voluntary certifications are popping up throughout the state, spearheaded by stakeholder groups. An article, *The Power of Partnerships: Landscape Scale Conservation Through Public/Private Collaboration*, in the recent issue of the *Natural Areas Journal*, Volume 27(3) 2007, details these efforts.

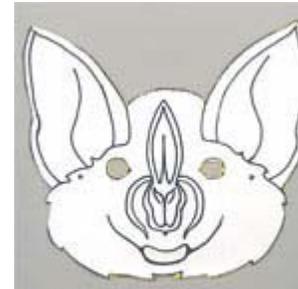
Submitted by Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Naples, Florida

Photo Album --

Vieques community explores the refuge's night skies and bats: -- more photos



Velvet free-tailed bat mask.
Drawing by Mike Barandiaran.



Red fruit bat mask. Drawing by Mike Barandiaran.

Student interns at Pocosin Lakes help host Wildlife Field Day -- more photos



Susan, Nadia, Betsy, and Kerri getting ready to sit in duck blind. FWS Photo.



Red Wolf and Nadia Hassounah. FWS Photo.



Nadia Hossounah and Susan Gullett in a boat. FWS Photo.



Betsy Larcom and Jay Stanton after rocket net shot. FWS Photo.

Refuge volunteers visit Cape Romain's historic Lighthouse Island -- more photos



Volunteers ferry to Lighthouse Island. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Tramping through the pluff mud and water. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Cape Romain lights. Photo by Ricky Wrenn.

Partnerships, stewardships, professionalism and science defined at the Anniston PCB Natural Resource Damage Assessment site -- more photos



Roger Helm, FWS Chief of the Division of Environmental Quality, catches a water snake. Photo by Pete Tuttle.



Warren Lorentz, FWS, catches a lizard. Photo by Roger Helm.



FWS and DOJ representatives kick up the creek bottom to catch critters in a net to view and identify on the bank of the creek. Photo by Roger Helm.

Visitor Services --

Marine Debris: a problem for coastal national wildlife refuges



Discarded barrel. FWS Photo.

With 174 coastal national wildlife refuges – including those bordering the Great Lakes – the National Wildlife Refuge System faces significant challenges in managing marine debris – man-made objects that have been discarded or abandoned in the water and on the shorelines. The newly-launched federal Marine Debris Initiative, a national and international program that focuses on preventing, identifying and reducing the problem, presents a multifaceted approach. In the Southeast, on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, volunteers attack the debris problem on a regular basis - making an effort to keep up with the never-ending task of cleaning up the ocean and soundside beaches.

The NOAA Web site, <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html>, is a first step in a program that not only brings together state and local authorities, the private sector and international partners, but also helps educate school children and others about their roles in solving the problem. The Refuge System includes about 30,000 coastal miles, 20 million coastal acres, seven million ocean acres with three million acres in coral reef ecosystems. The Refuge System also has 300,000 Congressionally-designated marine wilderness acres in 34 refuges.

"Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is over 12 miles long, so it includes more than 24 miles of ocean or soundside beaches. Our biggest clean-up challenges are the areas adjacent to Oregon Inlet. We have marine debris, trash from fisherman, and all kinds of things thrown from passing vehicles," says Abbey Reibel, coordinator for monthly clean-ups, at the refuge. "We're hopeful that educators will take advantage of the information in the NOAA website to help teach the next generation about the problem and how to prevent it."

The impact of marine debris is significant for the Refuge System. Entanglement by massive drift and trawl nets can kill animals. Seabirds, sea turtles, marine mammals and other fish and wildlife species suffer critical ingestion/digestion problems from marine debris, including Styrofoam fragments and suspended plastics that are washed off the land or dumped into the sea.

The scale of marine debris ranges from hundreds of tons of small plastics covering entire shoreline landscapes to large, abandoned vessels wrecked on Refuge System coasts and reefs. Refuge System field staff, volunteers and partners already work vigorously to remove, quantify and contain marine debris. Projects range from beach cleanup by volunteer groups to multi-agency partnerships that collect hundreds of tons of submerged or shoreline debris. For almost two decades, volunteers on the Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuges have collected and catalogued debris. Although the same sorts of surveys have been conducted on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge in the past, the current plan is to just try to keep the beaches cleaned up.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island NWR, Manteo, North Carolina

Wage Grade Profile --

Can holes make noise?



Steve Matzkow. FWS Photo.

"I came in quietly 31 years ago, and I am leaving the same way," Steve Matzkow said before he left for his retirement in August. Steve Matzkow may have come in quietly, but the hole he has left in A.R.M Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is enormously loud. Steve spent 31 years at Loxahatchee and retired as the maintenance supervisor. He plans to start a non-profit organization to protect sensitive lands, wildlife, rivers, and native vegetation through educational programs directed at very young children.

"I have witnessed first hand the mass development and destruction of south Florida," said Steve. "I also am glad that Wage Grade folks finally got the credit due for fighting in the trenches year after year. I will miss this family who really cared about the resource."

The "Wage Grade Employee of 2001" will be missed as well. Now we know that holes really do make noise.

Submitted by Chuck Ryan, A.R.M Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach, Florida