



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

MARCH 2007 NEWSLETTER



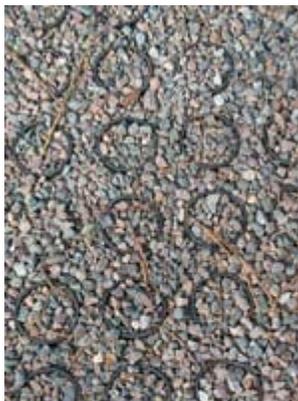
Service display at JIA. Photo by Blaine Eckberg.

### Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge exhibit featured at Jacksonville International Airport

The Jacksonville International Airport (JIA) Arts Commission, as part of its cultural organization's awareness program, selected the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge to produce an exhibit for display in the JIA baggage claim area from February through July 2007. Refuge Ranger Blaine Eckberg and Refuge Biologist Sara Aicher coordinated the design, production, and installation of an exhibit that showcases both the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Working with staff and volunteers, Aicher and Eckberg pulled together materials, photographs and other props highlighting the exhibit's "Wildness Near You" theme. "The JIA baggage claim receives about 6,000 visitors each day, both domestic and international. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service exhibit will share the baggage claim with a corresponding exhibit from the National Park Service.

*Submitted by Shawn Gillette, Okefenokee NWR, Folkston, Georgia*

### Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge's Jeff Friend Trail re-opens



The Jeff Friend Trail was resurfaced with boardwalks in low areas and "Gravel Pave 2" (shown here) to the remainder. The Gravel Pave material is fastened to the existing trail surface and filled with fine granite to provide a stable surface suitable for wheelchairs. FWS

Refuges all along the Gulf Coast can attest to the fact that rebuilding following a hurricane is a long, slow process. For Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, the cleanup and repairs followed back-to-back hurricanes—Ivan in 2004 and Katrina in 2005. The refuge reopened in April 2006, after being closed for more than a year and a half.

As yet another step in returning the refuge to full operation, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge recently reopened its Jeff Friend Trail, following extensive renovations. A major focus of the work was to make the trail wheelchair accessible. Members of the Mobile Patriots Wheelchair Basketball Team provided advice for refuge staff and Healtheon, the contractor responsible for installing wheelchair accessible features on the trail. "The Refuge is reaching out to physically challenged individuals," said Ron Hollis, assistant refuge manager. "With the opening of these trail features, people confined to wheelchairs will be able to see undisturbed coastal habitat, cross a wetland, see birds and other wildlife along Little Lagoon, and better enjoy this unique wildlife refuge. During the Re-opening Ceremony for the Jeff Friend Trail, Lloyd Culp, Complex Manager for the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, presented an Environmental Award to Mass Blackwell, of Three Deuces, for Recycling and Waste Prevention. Three Deuces was responsible for the cleanup of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge following Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina.



Members of the Mobile Patriots Wheelchair Basketball Team attended the opening ceremony for the renovated Jeff Friend Trail. FWS photo.

*Submitted by Mike Groutt, Daphne, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office*

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## Behind the Scenes--



Pea Island intern Brian Kidd releases a newly banded peregrine falcon while assisting the Carolina Raptor Center in its work on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Carolina Raptor Center.

### Refuge internships offer invaluable wildlife experience for those looking to get their feet wet

Drive along North Carolina highway 12 between Oregon Inlet and Rodanthe at any given time and there are some people you're more than likely to see: surfers, birders, photographers, and fishermen, just to name a few. There's probably some there though you're not as likely to see: Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge's resident volunteer interns, the refuge's unsung heroes.

Throughout the year, Pea Island Refuge hosts a wide variety of interns, usually soon-to-be or recent college graduates, usually from 12 weeks to 6 months. These interns assume many of the responsibilities associated with the day-to-day operation of a refuge.

"I get to wear many hats," says current Pea Island intern Brian Kidd. "That's one of the aspects I like most about being an intern. It keeps things interesting and strengthens your resume. When you perform the same job everyday, a lot of times you lose sight of the bigger picture. But here at Pea Island, in the span of just one day I can go from being biological technician to canoe tour leader to IT tech to maintenance staff. It really helps you get a better sense of just what all it takes to keep a refuge running."

Interns are housed on the refuge, and thanks to the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, are granted a bi-weekly food stipend. The most common duties performed by interns include monitoring sea turtle nests, mowing the grass, keeping locks well-oiled in the salty air, and leading interpretive programs such as canoe tours and marsh walks. Interns also find themselves working on special projects. For instance, in October, the Carolina Raptor Center sent a team to Pea Island to study fall migratory patterns.

"I was able to work closely with the Carolina Raptor Center team and assist in their duties, said Kidd. This opportunity provided me with a crash course in hawk identification. I also was fortunate enough to closely observe many different raptor species by assisting in the capture and release process. The captured raptors were all tagged with identification bands that will be used to track their movements."

Other special opportunities for interns have included overnight trips to the Edenton National Fish Hatchery to assist in fish stocking operations; educational visits to area schools; and participation in Wings Over Water, the Southeast's premier birding and wildlife festival.

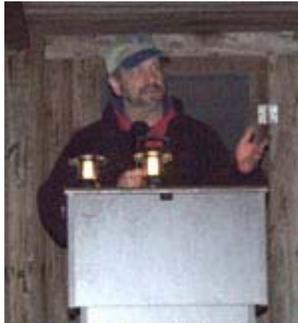
"I never know exactly what I'm going to be doing on any given day. Loggerhead sea turtles don't seem to heed the refuge's daylight use only policy, said Kidd. "Wildlife can happen at any time. Living on a refuge does have its perks though. There are very few places left in the continental U.S. where you can live on an island rent-free and your closest neighbor is seven miles away. It helps put the world in perspective. Sometimes the solitude is a welcome bit of peace in an often times much too busy world, but other times it can also be the biggest challenge to living on the island. You have to find ways to entertain yourself, but it never ends up being that difficult." Pea Island's miles of beaches and well protected marshes are ideal for water sports, fishing, photography, exploration, or just relaxing.

"What's hardest" admits Kidd, are the times when you just feel like ordering a pizza but then realize the nearest pizza-making establishment has closed for the season. Not that that matters of course, since they wouldn't deliver to the Refuge anyhow."

"At times the work can seem challenging, but in the end it's just simply rewarding to know you're doing such a great service," says Kidd. "The whole experience of living on your own in the midst of all the wildlife is humbling."

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## ***Bragging Rights --***



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall address a group of Service VP's and Departmental dignitaries at the Chesser Island Homestead. Photo by Blaine Eckberg, FWS

### **Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge kicks off the Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate Meeting southern-style**

Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary of the Interior, joined U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall, Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton, and other Service dignitaries and VIP's at the historic Chesser Island Homestead, in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, for an evening of southern charm and a true taste of the south! The event, hosted by the refuge and the Okefenokee Wildlife League, provided an appropriate beginning to the week-long U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate Meeting, which was held in Georgia and northeast Florida. The evening began with a sampling of fried "Gator" tail, and bear with gravy. Guests dined on southern fried chicken, mashed "taters," collard and mustard greens, "maters" and rice, cornbread. "Cathead" biscuits baked fresh on the homestead's wood stove rounded out the entrée. Entertainment was in the form of authentic four-note signing by the Roddenberry Sisters, whose great uncle, Thomas Chesser, built the homestead on Chesser Island in the early 1900's.

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

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### **Shooting Sports Field Day at the new Palachucola Shooting Range in Hampton County, South Carolina.**

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the South Carolina 4H program, showcased the new Palachucola shooting range by hosting a shooting sports field day on February 10, 2007. The range is located on Palachucola Wildlife Management area adjacent to the Webb Wildlife Center near Garnett, South Carolina. The project was partially funded by Pittman-Robinson funds, which were provided to the state as part of a Wildlife Restoration, Section 10 funding proposal submitted in 2002. Section 10 funds are available to the states specifically for firearm and bow hunter education and safety program grants. Dozens of enthusiasts participated in the shooting sports field day. All shooters were given an orientation and instructions on basic gun and bow safety before being allowed to use the range. Firearms, ammunition, targets and bows were provided free of charge and a shooting instructor provided one-on-one guidance during all of the live fire activities. A portable air rifle shooting station was a popular attraction for the younger shooters, while many of the older shooters wanted to try their skill at the trap shooting range. For more information about the Hunter Education program in South Carolina contact Lt. Jim Wagers at 803-734-3995. For information about the Palachucola Range, please contact Jay Cantrell at the Webb Wildlife Center at 803-625-3569.



Youths get one-on-one attention during live fire training. Photo by Wayne Waltz.

*Submitted by Wayne Waltz, Division of Federal Assistance, Atlanta, Georgia*

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Going hunting. Photo by Monica Harris.

### Hunters successful at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge's primitive hunts attract hunters willing to go the extra mile. Hunters enjoyed success during the 2006-2007 season. Sixty-six archers harvested seven deer and two hogs in October. One-hundred-twelve primitive weapons hunters harvested six sambar deer and three hogs in December, and 243 primitive weapons hunters harvested 35 white-tailed deer and 30 hogs in January. Hunter success rates were 14 percent on the archery hunt, 8 percent on the sambar deer hunt, and 27 percent on the white-tailed deer primitive weapons hunt. One more photo in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Thom Lewis, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola, Florida*

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### St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge welcomes new friends group

On January 16, the staff of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge joined the Supporters of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge for their first board meeting. The group hopes to provide increased public awareness of the refuge and to assist physically and financially with various refuge related projects. The seven-member board has become incorporated, established its by-laws and has filed for 501C (3) non-profit status. The group is currently working on a membership drive and plans to hold their first kick-off event in May.



Members of the Supporters of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Monica Harris.

*Submitted by Monica Harris, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola, Florida*

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Members of the Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance enjoy lunch. Photo by Monica Harris.

### St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge partners with other organizations

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge recently hosted the Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance meeting on St. Vincent Island. During the meeting we discussed hydrology issues and the Memorandum of Agreement between the partners. The Supporters of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge prepared the lunch. This Apalachicola Stewardship Alliance was started in May 2006 by Refuge Manager Monica Harris to meet with various local agencies and organizations in the local area in an effort to understand local challenges and establish a working relationship. The Alliance meets on a quarterly basis.

*Submitted by Monica Harris, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola, Florida*

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### Tracking tubes provide vital Alabama beach mouse data

Alabama beach mouse populations are down following two years of severe hurricanes, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists need current data about the species. Biologists in the Daphne Field Office have adapted a design developed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission to collect data using a "tracking tube." The tube, made of PVC pipe and stiff wire, provides a means of determining presence or absence of the species without the stress and risk of harm posed by live trapping. It also allows field biologists to track how beach mouse populations respond as dune habitat slowly recovers from hurricane damage. The Daphne Field Office is currently using about 60 of the tubes, covering areas of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands, as well as a number of private properties covered by Habitat Conservation Plans.



Tracking tube. FWS photo.



Daphne Field Office Biologist Darren LeBlanc checks a tracking tube for signs of Alabama beach mouse activity. FWS photo.

*Submitted by Mike Groutt, Daphne, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office*

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### Daphne biologist speaks at a Louisiana State University seminar

Rob Tawes, a biologist in the Daphne Ecological Services Field Office, spoke at Louisiana State University's College of the Coast and Environment on February 9th. Tawes' presentation was part of a spring seminar series aimed at coastal engineers, biologists, and oceanographers. The presentation was entitled "Identifying and Conserving High Elevation Habitat for the Endangered Alabama Beach Mouse." It outlined the Daphne Field Office's review of surveys, aerial imagery, and storm surge models to delineate uninundated habitat important as beach mouse refugia during and after hurricanes.

*Submitted by Mike Groutt, Daphne, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office*

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Visitors tour Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Photos by Amanda Patrick.

### Local homemakers attend special open house event at hatchery

With a new Visitor/Environmental Education Center, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery is eagerly moving forward in planning and hosting various events designed to foster excitement within the local community, and the local 11 homemaker clubs within Russell County were excited to be a part of one such event. On Saturday, January 25th, 2007, Wolf Creek Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick and Volunteers Gene and Reba Wagner hosted an open house event for all of the local homemaker club members. The event's highlights included tours of the new center, door prize

giveaways and wonderful homemade refreshments. Almost all of the members present were first time visitors to the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center, and feedback was extremely positive. The Center is the first of its kind for one of the Southeast's hatcheries.



Visitors tour Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Photos by Amanda Patrick.

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

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### Wolf Creek Hatchery joins holiday parade

With the help of staff members and their families, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery did their part to spread a little holiday spirit by participating in the 2006 Russell Springs Christmas Parade. Project Leader James Gray and Maintenance Worker Chris Murphy utilized one of the stocking trucks for their "float," complete with some holiday cheer via decorations. Crowd participants were also treated to candy fish as the truck passed by.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery truck in Christmas parade. Photo by James Gray.

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

### Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge works with several partners to restore Atlantic White Cedar

On January 27, 2007, Boy Scout Troop 447 from Laurinburg, North Carolina assisted the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in its quest to restore Atlantic White Cedar by planting 300 seedlings around the perimeter of one of the refuge ponds. The Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, through the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, provided the young seedlings. Troop 447 also enjoyed a 10-mile hike and a presentation about the refuge's history and management activities.



Members of Boy Scout Troop 447 prepare to plant seedlings. Photo by Don Cookman

*Submitted by Don Cookman, Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, McBee, South Carolina*



The BORCE conservation boundary. Map by Cookeville Field Office GIS Technical Center. FWS photo.

### Conservation Easement on the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee

The Environmental Contaminants program took advantage of multiple authorities to protect habitat in Tennessee for the endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) and interior forest breeding birds. As partial settlement under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) for natural resource injuries in the Tennessee and Clinch River watersheds (Lower Watts Bar reservoir), the Department of Energy (DOE) granted the State of Tennessee the approximately 3000-acre Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE). The BORCE provides significant interior forest breeding bird habitat and is within one of the largest, contiguous forested tracts remaining in the Ridge and Valley ecoregion of east Tennessee. The area will be managed by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Natural Areas, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency under a framework developed through collaboration between the Service and our state and federal co-

trustees for the Oak Ridge Reservation Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council.

In a separate action, DOE proposed to transfer a 366-acre parcel that is contiguous with the BORCE to the City of Oak Ridge for economic development purposes. Environmental Contaminants staff worked with endangered species biologists to consult with DOE on their Environmental Assessment for the proposed transfer under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Recommendations made through the consultation process resulted in a boundary revision and delineation of protected travel corridors for the gray bat. In addition, Environmental Contaminants staff provided technical assistance to Oak Ridge city officials during the National Environmental Policy Act documentation process to help design potential development scenarios that would lessen the potential negative impacts on BORCE lands and Service trust resources.



Access road going toward conservation easement boundary. The yellow gate is the boundary. Photo by Steven Alexander.

*Submitted by Steven Alexander, Cookeville, Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office*

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## ***Hats Off --***



FWS Photo.

### **Three Deuces receives environmental award for recycling and waste prevention at Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge**

During the Re-opening Ceremony for the Jeff Friend Trail, Lloyd Culp, Complex Manager for the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Alabama, presented an Environmental Award to Mass Blackwell, of Three Deuces, for Recycling and Waste Prevention. Three Deuces was responsible for the cleanup of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge following Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. FWS Photo.

*Submitted by Mike Groutt, Daphne, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office*

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### **Nominations for Environmental Leadership Award**

Nominations for the 2007 Fish and Wildlife Service Environmental Leadership Award are to be submitted to Southeast Region by March 7, 2007. This Service award is a great opportunity to recognize individual, group, or contractor accomplishments in: recycling, waste/pollution prevention, sustainable design/green buildings, environmental management systems, and green purchasing. Consideration should be given so that deserving employees, stations and contractors have the opportunity to be recognized for environmental achievement. For additional information please contact Nora David at 404-679-4117 or [nora\\_david@fws.gov](mailto:nora_david@fws.gov)

*Submitted by Nora David, Engineering Division, Atlanta, Georgia*

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

**Hunters successful at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge -- more photos**



Archery hunting. Photo by Monica Harris.

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## Visitor Services --

### Costly Geo-Boy vandalized on Alligator River Refuge



The Geo-Boy was recognizable only by the small portion of the roof above the water line in the canal in the Laurel Bay Farm Unit. Photo by Donnie Harris.

On the last week-end in January, an unknown person walked behind a locked gate about a mile into the Laurel Bay Fram Unit of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and intentionally caused major damage to a \$240,000 piece of heavy equipment called a Geo-Boy. The Geo-Boy is a specialized piece of tracked heavy equipment with a heavy duty flail cutter on the front used for firebreak maintenance.

On Monday, January 28, the Geo-Boy was discovered in the bottom of a canal near the Laurel Bay Pump station, visible only by the 12-20 inches of the roof of the cab that was above the water line. The repairs to the Geo-boy, estimated at \$50,000, will be made at Jarraff Industries in Minnesota where the Geo-Boy was purchased.

The Laurel Bay Farm unit, scheduled to be open for such activities as quail and rabbit hunting, wildlife observation, and fishing, in early February, did not open for public use until February 10, due to the implied threat to other equipment located in the area.

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



A salvage company brought a diver and crane to recover the Geo-Boy from the canal. Photo by Donnie Harris.

## Wage Grade Profile --

### Glenn McMichael: Helping to conserve wildlife habitat



Glenn McMichael. FWS Photo.

Glenn McMichael, engineering equipment operator at Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge in Hillsboro, Georgia, has worked at Piedmont during his entire 20-year service career.

"I have enjoyed working here to preserve the land and its resources," says Glenn.

Glenn specializes in working on impoundment projects, putting in siphon systems and rehabbing dams. He also keeps the refuge's public roads in great shape.

He has been married to his wife, Karen, for thirty-five years. They have two grown sons, Brett and Jason. Glenn is a family man who enjoys helping family members with their various projects.

*Submitted by Elsie Davis, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia*