



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

MAY 2007 NEWSLETTER

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Peter Tuttle, Resource Contaminants Specialist at Daphne Ecological Services Field Office, displays his alligator handling prowess with a five-foot long wild alligator (with safely rubber bands on jaws). Photo by Tom MacKenzie, USFWS.

### More than a dozen agencies attend Spill Safety and Leadership Course in Lafayette, Louisiana

About 50 emergency responders from federal and state agencies from around the country gathered in Lafayette, Louisiana in early April. They were learning how to safely protect the wildlife that may be impacted by oil spills and hazardous materials releases.

Participants had the chance to see a wide array of equipment in action, and a host of tools of the trade. Harold Doucet, Clean Gulf Associates, talked with the participants on the logistic requirements of wildlife cleaning and showed them his quick-response trailers. His group routinely provides quick response for 141 petroleum companies to oil spills to save wildlife from the adverse effects of oil or other contaminants. According to Doucet, it takes 345 gallons of water just to clean one oiled Pelican.

Training subjects included aviation safety, animal handling, coastal and inland spill scenarios, endangered species and migratory bird issues, field safety during wildlife hazing, media relations, and airboat and mud boat training. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region sponsored the training to enhance federal and state response to oil spills and hazardous material releases.

Participants included U.S. Fish and Wildlife containments specialists and refuge leadership from around the country. Also participating were representatives from the Department of the Interior – Aviation Management Directorate and Motorboat Operator (Airboat) Certification Course; the Texas General Lands Office; the U.S. Coast Guard; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;

the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of Natural Resources. Representatives ; the Louisiana office of the governor – Oil Spill Coordinator’s Office.

Other participants included representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services; Marine Spill Response Corporation – Clean Gulf Associates; Southern Helicopter; the National Park Service; Reed Joseph International Company; the U.S. Geological Survey; and the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration – Emergency Response Division.

More photos are found [here](#).



Felix Lopez, Contaminants Specialist Boqueron Ecological Services Field Office, Puerto Rico, ensures safe operations as Peggy Whitaker, Oil spill NERDA specialist, Panama City, FL fires a "Screamer Siren" pyrotechnic device. Photo by Tom MacKenzie, USFWS.

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## Behind the Scenes--

No stories submitted this month.

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## Bragging Rights --



First of its kind! Prototype Government Quarters complete at Hobe Sound NWR. From l to r: Vincent Sandoval, contractor, Asset Group, Inc.; Delano Jenkins, Government Construction representative; and Margo Stahl, refuge manager and new tenant. Photo by James Gammon.

### Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge gets new government quarters

Following hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in 2004, efforts were underway to replace the damaged government quarters at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge in Florida with the new prototype quarters designed in the Southeast Region. These beautiful quarters are also in the works at other refuges in the Southeast including J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel, Florida, and Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The Refuge Manager at Hobe Sound NWR wishes to thank Jon Andrew, Elizabeth Souheaver, Susan White, Tony Pardinias, Todd Rainwater, Natasha Rowland-Howie, Delano Jenkins, Harvey Hill and Mark Musaus for their efforts in helping this project become reality.

*Submitted by Margo Stahl, Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, Florida*

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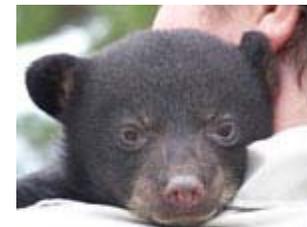
### Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge helps reintroduce black bears into southern Arkansas

Fifty people watched as staff from Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission released two female black bears and five cubs - on the refuge March 24. During the 2006-2007, the final year of the project, eight mother bears and 14 cubs have been released on the refuge. The release was part of a seven-year repatriation effort, which begun in the spring of 2000. The goal of the AGFC and USFWS is to establish a viable black bear population in southern Arkansas. Four years ago, Felsenthal NWR had the first black bear birth in Arkansas since the turn of the century.



L-R: David Luker, Rick Eastridge, Allen Clawson, and Mark Barbee, all of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, with a cub. Photo by Elizabeth Day.

*Submitted by Elizabeth Day, South Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Crossett, Arkansas*



One of the Felsenthal cubs. The cub's mother had abandoned him after two days. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission rescued him and placed him with another mother bear. Photo by Bo Sloan.

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### Trout Unlimited and Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery: a winning combination

Members from the Louisville, Kentucky Chapter of Trout Unlimited were on hand April 2, 2007, to help prepare the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center for the upcoming dedication ceremony. In conjunction with their fellow Bluegrass Chapter of TU, Louisville members Frank Elsen and Roger Stotz spearheaded a project to design and implement a Trout Unlimited themed display for the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center. What resulted from Elsen and Stotz's hard work were three beautifully framed pieces, including one framed rainbow trout print and a brown trout print. To better help viewers understand Trout Unlimited's role in conservation efforts throughout the state, literature, including magazines and meeting information, were included in the display concept.



The new display and those who were involved in its planning (l to r): TU Member Frank Elsen; Wolf Creek NFH Project Leader James Gray; Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick; and TU Member Roger Stotz. Photo by Judy Toppins.

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



Volunteers pick up trash on the refuge. FWS Photo.

### Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge hosts monthly clean-up

One day each month the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge hosts a noon luncheon on the front porch of the Pea Island Visitor Center. After lunch, community volunteers go to the North end parking lot by Bonner Bridge for the clean-up.

"It's become quite the social event, with a number of repeat local volunteers, Fish and Wildlife Service Staff, Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Members, and concerned visitors to the Outer Banks area," says Abbey Reibel, Volunteer Coordinator for Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. "It's amazing the amount of trash that accumulates from one month to the next. What a great way to give back to this pristine coastal environment that so many people and wildlife are dependant upon. And, we have a great time picking up trash together!"

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

### Alabama signs statewide Safe Harbor Agreement for the Red-cockaded woodpecker

The red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) may be able to breathe a little easier in Alabama. Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) officials signed a statewide Safe Harbor agreement with the Service on March 29 and enrolled their first landowner participant. In a ceremony celebrating ADCNR's commitment to RCW conservation, more than 60 people attended the event hosted by Campbell Lanier III at historic Sehoj Plantation, near Hurtsboro, Alabama. Attendees enjoyed the beautiful spring weather at the event on the front lawn of the old plantation house while listening to speakers including Regional Director Sam Hamilton, Corky Pugh, Director of the state's Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, and Ralph Costa, the Service's recovery coordinator.



The Safe Harbor agreement provides participating landowners with regulatory assurances in return for managing their lands in a manner that provides a conservation benefit to the species. Lanier, owner of Sehoj and Enon Plantations in southeast



FWS Regional Director Sam Hamilton signs a Declaration of Intent, along with Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Director M.N. "Corky" Pugh. Several landowners joined USFWS and ADCNR in signing the Declarations of Intent, signifying their interest in working toward

Alabama, became the first participant in the new agreement, enrolling more than 17,000 acres of suitable and potentially suitable RCW habitat. He also agreed to set the baseline at 10 potential breeding pairs, indicating a willingness to increase the population above its current numbers.

Attendees at the event included representatives from the Service, ADCNR, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Alabama Forestry Association, The Nature Conservancy, Alabama Power, Alabama Forestry Commission, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The event also attracted a number of landowners from around the area.

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

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### Grasses in the Classes program grows

Daphne, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office biologists once again took time out for a day at the beach, working with local area high school students on an ongoing dune restoration project. The event in late March featured students from Daphne and Foley High Schools planting a variety of dune plants that had been grown at their respective schools. The planting took place at locations on Gulf State Park that suffered extensive damage from Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. The dunes and beaches, once restored, will provide habitat for the Alabama and Perdido Key beach mice, shore birds, and nesting sea turtles.

The Grasses in the Classes Program is a cooperative effort of the Service, Baldwin County, Alabama Schools, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Gulf State Park. The Service provides part of the funding for the nursery grown plants as well as technical expertise in the planting process.

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



Daphne Partners Biologist Randy Roach provides expert guidance to Daphne High School students working on a dune restoration project at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The students planted beach morning glory, seaside elder, and sea purslane that had been grown in a nursery at the school as part of the Baldwin County Grasses in the Classes program. Photo by Margaret Sedleky, Baldwin County Schools.



### Connecting Kids with nature at Santee National Wildlife Refuge

Fifteen thoroughly excited young people and 13 nearly as excited adults had the time of their life on Saturday, February 24, at Santee National Wildlife Refuge. They helped capture and band 180 green-winged teal.

Imagine if you will - the nicest of winter afternoons with temperatures in the upper 60's; throw in a secluded cove filled with a few thousand ducks - and you have a glimmer of the idyllic conditions these kids experienced. In an unusual turn of events, the ducks decided to wait until after lunch to show up on the banding site set up by refuge staff.

Just around the corner from the band site, Larry Woodward watched through a spotting scope as flocks of teal came into the pond to feed. The rest of the "banding crew" waited some distance away so as not to disturb the birds. As soon as the birds strolled up and began to leisurely eat the corn, Woodward detonated the rockets attached to the banding net.

The "banding crew" was thoroughly excited when they heard a loud "boom" and saw a big puff of smoke rise from the banding site. On cue, everyone loaded up in vehicles and headed to the nearby banding pond. Woodward was already securing the net around the teal captured underneath. Refuge staff and volunteers quickly went to work to safely remove the ducks from under the net so that numbered bands could be attached to the leg of each bird. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Kay McCutcheon, Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Summerton, South Carolina*

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### **Careers come naturally for Sewee Earth Stewards**

The Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center hosted the fifth annual Careers Come Naturally event for Sewee Earth Stewards March 20-22. The Earth Stewards, 350 fifth-grade students from six Lowcountry schools, came to learn about career opportunities with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, South Carolina State Parks and the City of Charleston.

Agency personnel presented "hands-on" programs designed to promote career awareness within environmental fields, as well as stimulate interest in various positions. Students conducted a waterfowl census survey, tested water quality and looked at microscopic pond plankton, and explored the fascinating life of marine animals. Foresters demonstrated silviculture instruments used in forest management, and State Park Rangers illustrated the art of cultural and historical interpretation.



Students conduct waterfowl survey. Photo by Ray Paterra.

The Careers Come Naturally event is a culmination of the Sewee Earth Stewards eight-week conservation education program sponsored by the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center, SEWEE Association, and the International Center for Birds of Prey. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Patricia Lynch. Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Awendaw, South Carolina*

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Vieques National Wildlife Refuge team participates in Relay for Life. Photo by Roger Torres

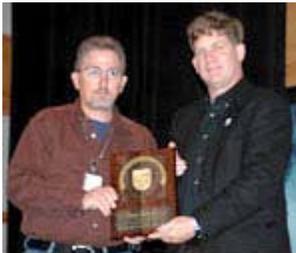
### **Vieques National Wildlife Refuge participates in Relay for Life**

Staff from the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge participated in the American Cancer Society event, Relay for Life March 24 and 25. Our team consisted of Service staff and volunteers, Department of Natural Resources staff, and last year's Youth Conservation Corps participants. This 24-hour event was filled with fun, laughter and mixed emotions. The Service team participated in the parade, booth decorations and relay. Our team focused on Skin Cancer – Melanoma and distributed over 100 brochures to the participating Vieques community.

*Submitted by Gisella Burgos, Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, Vieques, Puerto Rico*

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## Hats Off --



Glen Stratton. Photo by Anna Reiber.

### Glen Stratton wins 2006 Fuels Management Excellence Award for Southeast Region

Geoff Haskett, Assistant Director, National Wildlife Refuge System, presents Glen Stratton, fire management officer at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Florida, with the 2006 Fuels Management Excellence Award for the Southeast Region. The presentation was made during the November 2006 National Fire Management Workshop held at the National Conservation Training Center.

*Submitted by Robert Eaton, Division of Refuges, Atlanta, Georgia*

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### Bob Eaton wins 2006 Fire Management Leadership Award for Southeast Region

Geoff Haskett, Assistant Director, National Wildlife Refuge System, presents Bob Eaton, Deputy Chief, Division of Fire Management with the 2006 Fire Management Leadership Award for the Southeast Region. The presentation was made during the November 2006 National Fire Management Workshop held at the National Conservation Training Center.



Bob Eaton. Photo by Anna Reiber.

*Submitted by Robert Eaton, Division of Refuges, Atlanta, Georgia*



Bill Mellor with Robert Oliveri, Special Agent in Charge of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Photo by Stephen Clark

### Bill Mellor receives Director's Superior Service Award

Special Agent Bill Mellor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Law Enforcement Office in Slidell, Louisiana, received a Director's Superior Service Award on March 21, at the National Conservation Training Center. Ken Stansell, the Service's Deputy Director, presented Mellor with the award during the 2007 special agent in service meeting Mellor was honored for nearly 30 years of successfully protecting migratory birds, endangered species, and other wildlife resources.

With more than 2,100 migratory game bird cases to his credit, Agent Mellor has effectively combated the exploitation of waterfowl resources, preserving populations that represent a national treasure. He has worked the "waterfowl beat" not only on the ground, but also from the air, logging more than 4,000 hours of low-level flight over a three-state area. His vigilance and expertise snared commercial operatives as well as individual violators. Agent Mellor's success in exposing seafood companies trafficking in unlawfully harvested redfish not only strengthened efforts to

ensure redfish sustainability but also prompted passage of new, more effective laws to protect redfish populations in the Gulf of Mexico. His work on a case in which fishermen were stealing brown pelican eggs from a newly reestablished nesting area resulted in four successful prosecutions under the Endangered Species Act. As the Service case agent investigating a 2005 oil spill that killed more than 700 brown pelicans, Agent Mellor's work was critical in securing settlement negotiations expected to yield as much as \$20 million in restitution.

"We should all feel honored that one of our own received this prestigious award," said Jim Gale, Special Agent in Charge, Southeast Region. "I am extremely proud of Bill and what he has accomplished throughout his career, I can think of no one more deserving of a Superior Service Award than Bill Mellor."

*Submitted by Robert Oliveri, Division of Law Enforcement, Jackson, Mississippi*

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

**Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery dedicates new Visitor and Environmental Education Center -- more photos**



Sable Floyd of Southwestern High School (Somerset, Kentucky), a member of the school's Raptor Recovery Program, proudly displays one of the program's noble friends. As a part of the dedication ceremony, the students brought in two eagles to flank each corner of the stage. Photo by Velma Cross, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District.



Sam Hamilton, Regional Director, Southeast Region, speaks with the crowd about his excitement for the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Photo by Velma Cross, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District.



Jon Streufert, Branch Chief of Hatchery Operations and Maintenance, Washington Office joining Dr. Mamie Parker's term "Let's Celebrate" in conjunction with the dedication of the new center. Photo by Velma Cross, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District. Photo by Velma Cross, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District.



Mammoth Spring National Fish Hatchery Assistant Manager Bruce Greene shares leads a session on reptiles. Approximately 150 students were on hand following the dedication ceremony to participate in an environmental education field day. Photo by Linda Hobbs, Mammoth Springs National Fish Hatchery.

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### Connecting Kids with nature at Santee National Wildlife Refuge -- more photos



Getting the ducks out. Photo by Mario Epstein.



The "banding crew" hangs onto their ducks. Photo by Mario Epstein.



Marshall Saxser of Georgetown, South Carolina waits patiently to have his duck banded. Photo by Mario Epstein.

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### Careers come naturally for Sewee Earth Stewards -- more photos



NOAA Community Outreach Specialist Jeff Paternoster shows students how to use a plankton net. Photo by Ray Paterra.



Students take a close look at marine animals with City of Charleston Environmental Educator Matt Olson. Photo by Ray Paterra



Earth Steward student throws a plankton net into the Sewee Pond. Photo by Ray Paterra



Student learns how to use a clinometer with Francis Marion National Forest Forester John DuPre. Photo by Ray Paterra.



Students take a close look at a hermit crab making itself at home in a shell. Photo by Ray Paterra.



# Visitor Services --

## Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery dedicates new Visitor and Environmental Education Center



L to R: Alan Coffey, Russell County Chamber of Commerce and Former President of the Friends of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc.; James Gray, Project Leader, Wolf Creek NFH; Rick Nehrling, Program Supervisor (Fisheries), Southeast Regional Office; and Roger Schulz, DARD, Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office all take time for a photo before the ceremony begins. Photo by Kay Hively, Friends of Neosho National Fish Hatchery

Wednesday, April 4, 2007 marked a very special occasion for the Southeast Region, in particular the Fisheries Program, as the staff of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery officially dedicated the new Visitor and Environmental Education Center facility.

Although the day was a bit blustery, a crowd of approximately 150 people gathered to commemorate the event. It began with a presentation of flags by the Russell County Naval Junior ROTC group followed by a strong showing of support through a distinguished panel of speakers, including Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton; Jon Streufert, Branch Chief of Hatchery Operations and Maintenance; Washington Office; Congressional representatives from Congressman Ed Whitfield and Hal Rogers' offices; Alan Coffey, President, Russell County Chamber of Commerce; Scott Pierce, Superintendent, Russell County School System; and Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. President Jerry Coleman. Wolf Creek NFH Project Leader James Gray served as the Master of Ceremonies.



Presentation of the flags by the Russell County Naval Junior ROTC. Photo by Kay Hively, Friends of Neosho National Fish Hatchery.

Following the speakers, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the entrance to the new Visitor/Environmental Education Center. Guided tours were available to all who visited the center that day, and the Friend's of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc. treated many of the guests to a wonderful VIP luncheon. Approximately 100 school children were on hand to participate in a mini- environmental education field day.

As the first of its kind for the nation's 70 hatcheries, the center serves as a fun and engaging learning resource for all visitors, especially for the 28,000 school children who live within a one -hour driving distance of the new

center. Through state-of-the-art exhibits, classroom, an indoor theater and a gift shop, the center also offers a myriad of outreach programs and workshops. A newly created environmental education curriculum, which is designed for hatcheries and tailored to meet the needs of teachers in Kentucky, will soon be launched. The facility is also supported by the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. and a strong volunteer staff.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery is one of 14 hatcheries located in the Service's Southeast Region. As the sole producer of trout for the state of Kentucky, Wolf Creek produces approximately 1,000,000 rainbow and brown trout each year, netting an economic ratio of \$50 million in economic benefits. The trout from Wolf Creek are used to stock over 100 different public waters in the state. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Exterior View of the new Visitor/ Environmental Education Center. Photo by Kay Hively, Friends of Neosho National Fish Hatchery



L to r: Featured speakers and VIP's gather for the ribbon cutting ceremony: Violie Kidd, CEO/ President of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association; LaNette Girdler, Executive Assistant/Care Manager for Congressman Hal Rogers; Mickey Garner, Russell County Judge-Executive; Alan Coffey, President of the Russell County Chamber of Commerce; Amanda Patrick, Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist, Wolf Creek NFH; Sam Hamilton, Regional Director, Southeast Region, USFWS; and Jon Streufert.

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

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## Wage Grade Profile --

### Donald Beard 'Jack of All Trades' at Norfolk National Fish Hatchery



Donald Beard, FWS Photo.

"We raise a lot of trout, the most in the region," says Donald Beard, maintenance worker at Norfolk National Fish Hatchery in Mountain Home, Arkansas. "When anybody comes up a little short we're the first they'll call. When you raise as many pounds as we do, you can always make it up in the end."

The hatchery is the nation's largest producer of rainbow trout within the National Fish Hatchery System.

"You just don't know what you're going to do on any given day, from all aspects of fish work, to servicing equipment, to mowing the lawn, to SAMMS. It's a very rewarding job," says Donald. "I remember when I was little, you would get to go to the fish hatchery for your field trip, and that was cool to see all the big fish and get a tour; now, I'm part of that."

It seems that he likes working for the federal government, having previously worked for the Corps of Engineers, the Postal Service, and the U. S. Army. Eight of his 13 years as a federal employee have been spent with the Service. When not working, Donald enjoys being on the water getting some sun, and spending time with his wife Cindy and their 18-month-old son Logan.

*Submitted by Ken Boyles, Norfolk National Fish Hatchery, Mountain Home, Arkansas*