



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

NOVEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

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Red Wolf Recovery Program wins nation's top conservation award

Thirty-five years ago, only 17 red wolves roamed the planet, with only 14 used to begin a captive breeding program. Since then, the red wolf population has grown to more than 300 individuals. On September 19, 2007, the Red Wolf Recovery Program received a national award for its contribution to that growth.

In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA) and the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan®, made the first attempt in history to restore a carnivore species that was extinct in the wild. Four adult red wolf pairs were released into a part of their natural habitat on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, just 14 years after the red wolf captive breeding program began. The year 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of that release and the 30th anniversary of the first red wolf litter born at PDZA after the breeding program was formalized in 1973.

On behalf of the Red Wolf Recovery Program, Will Waddell, Red Wolf Species Survival Plan Coordinator, Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, accepts congratulations from former Secretary of Interior, Bruce Babbitt for receiving the 2007 Association of Zoos and Aquariums North American Conservation Award. Photo by Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium.

In honor of these anniversaries, and in recognition of great success in species recovery, the Red Wolf Recovery Program received the North America Conservation Award from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Will Waddell, the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan Coordinator at PDZA, accepted the award.

“The Red Wolf Recovery Program gratefully acknowledges this prestigious national award from AZA and the recognition that it brings to all of the partnerships needed to save this endangered species,” said Bud Fazio, team leader of the Red Wolf Recovery Program. “The award is a tribute to long-term conservation efforts in red wolf recovery. We thank all those who have dedicated many years of hard work through their involvement in the AZA Red Wolf Species Survival Plan, associated research and population management, propagation on island national wildlife refuges and parks, restoration of a wild population, scientific research, development of planning documents, museum assistance for specimen storage, and public education.”

Submitted by Diane Hendry, Alligator River NWRefuge, Manteo, North Carolina

Behind the Scenes--



The old visitor center is demolished. Photo by Serena Rinker.

Out with the old, In with the new

No, we are not talking about a New Year celebration. This is the long-awaited beginning of the construction of the ARM Loxahatchee Visitor Center and Administration Building. In order to start, it meant the end to the old buildings.

Demolition of the ARM Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge hurricane damaged headquarters and visitor center began with the rumble of treads and the slam of the backhoe's shovel into the side wall of the headquarters building on April 16, 2007. Within what seemed like seconds, huge sections of the building were no longer there. In hours, all that remained of the old administration building was a flat area on stilts. This is the area that will be converted into an overlook. It will overlook the man made Compartment C area that contains the Marsh Trail, a series of public trails that visitors can walk to view some of the extensive wildlife of the Everglades.



The old headquarters building is demolished. Photo by Serena Rinker.



Artist's rendering of new combined headquarters and visitor center. Property of FWS.

One week later, on April 23, the demolition continued with the wrecking ball (or perhaps better, shovel) crashing through the Visitor Center. One day later, the old Visitor Center was almost gone. The day after that, it was completely gone. Its foundation will also be used as the base for an overlook in the Cypress Swamp.

With these two buildings eliminated, the real work building the new Visitor Center and Admin building has begun. The construction site was leveled and prepped for the new building. Next, the concrete base for an elevator and the foundation will be poured and the "real" construction will begin. We are all anticipating next year when we can move on in to a state of the art facility!

Submitted by Chuck Ryan, ARM Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach, Florida

Assistant Refuge Manager at Eufaula now serving in Iraq

Danny Moss, assistant refuge manager at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge is currently serving a 12-18-month tour of duty in Iraq.

"Danny's heart is truly in tune with the resource. He will be missed by all the staff during his deployment, but I will certainly miss having a dependable go to type of assistant to handle issues on a daily basis. As much as I would like to whine about the impact on me, I know that the sacrifice that Danny and his family are making is much greater. Danny is an outstanding employee, but he is also a true friend and I have the greatest respect for him and the job that he is doing for all of us here at home," said Troy Littrell, refuge manager of Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge.



Danny Moss in Iraq. Photo by Douglas Jenkins, U.S. Navy



Danny Moss at Eufaula. Photo by Troy Littrell.

In addition to his work at the refuge, Danny has been a member of the United States Naval Reserve since July 2002. With 11 years total military service, Danny has four years of active duty in the U.S. Navy from 1983-1987, when he was aboard the USS John F. Kennedy. During his tour, he was a part of the multi-national peace keeping force in the Mediterranean after the Beirut bombing on the marine barracks in 1983. He served two Mediterranean cruises: 1983-1984 and 1986-1987. Danny also served one year (2001-2002) in the Arkansas Army National Guard.

His personal awards include the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, two Navy Meritorious Unit Commendations, one Battle "E" ribbon, one Navy Good

Conduct Medal, one Navy Reserve Meritorious Service Medal, one Navy Expeditionary Medal, two National Defense Service Medals, one Joint Meritorious Unit Award, and two Sea Service Deployment ribbons.

Currently, Danny is stationed at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, where he works at the DRMO (Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office) receiving, storing and locating military property from cradle to grave. Danny also serves as a security escort to get scrap metal venture contractors on and off base. Even with his military responsibilities and hot, desert location, Danny continues to nurture his passion for the resource.

Yes, even in a desert, he found ducks!

In a recent email from Danny, he wrote: "Get a load of this; we have a pond of about five or six acres behind our office, and you ought to see the ducks that fly into this little hole in the evenings. I have observed 4 or 5 different species so far. Now, that is like having a little piece of home here. I love those ducks."

His wife, Mindy, and their two children, Taylor age 5 and Jamison age 7, certainly hated to see Danny leave; however, Danny said, "I'm answering the call to duty. Like more than 160,000 other troops and their families. I knew it was a possibility when I joined the Reserve, but in my heart, I'm always a sailor."

Submitted by Mindy Gautreaux, Central Louisiana NWR Complex and Troy Littrell, Eufaula NWR, AL

Bragging Rights --



The Strategic Plans for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Programs, Southeast Region, were developed in collaboration with many partners. FWS Photo.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Programs complete Strategic Plans

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) and Coastal Programs have completed Strategic Plans (Fiscal Year 2007-2011) for the Southeast Region, and these plans are now available on the Internet at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/partners/StrategicPlan.html>

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/pdf/SECoastalProgramStrategicPlan2007.pdf>

These strategic plans are based on the Service's 2006 Vision Documents for the Partners and Coastal Programs that provided a national overview and established the five Program goals that are comprehensively addressed in the Regional Plans. These goals are: (1) Conserve habitat; (2) Broaden and strengthen partnerships; (3) Improve information sharing and communication; (4) Enhance our workforce; and, (5) Increase accountability.

In collaboration with the Service's many partners and stakeholders, these Strategic Plans identify priority habitats, selected geographic focus areas and focal species, and specific action strategies (Goal One) for each Coastal Program Office, and for each Southeastern State and the Caribbean (PFW Program) to guide our strategic habitat conservation and partnership efforts over the next five years. Although most of our efforts will be directed to the designated focus areas identified in this plans, each program has maintained the flexibility to identify and develop new focus areas as significant partnership opportunities arise.

The Service and the highly skilled, locally-based staff of the Partners and Coastal Programs will take a leadership role in implementing the strategies and actions identified in these plans. To achieve the Service's goals, it will need a shared and mutual commitment from all Service programs and from its partners to focus on priority needs and the efficient delivery of habitat conservation on private lands.

Submitted by Ronnie Haynes, Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal Programs, Atlanta, Georgia

One church becomes steward to a rare fish

On September 8, 2007, at a small African-American church in Birmingham, Alabama, more than 30 people met to learn about protection of water quality and preservation of the endangered watercress darter within a spring next to the church. Bishop Heron Johnson of Faith Apostolic Church welcomed participants to a six-hour workshop sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund, Alabama Water Watch, Stormwater Management Authority, the Sierra Water Sentinels and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Jackson, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office. Most of the people who participated are members of the church and will contribute to the monthly monitoring of the water quality of Seven Springs, one of only four sites for the endangered fish. Hanna Burwinkle and Taylor Steele of Storm Water Management Authority were the instructors, while Bryan Burgess of Sierra Water Sentinels and Daniel Drennen of the Service's Jackson Field Office assisted in the workshop.



Spring head of Seven Springs, habitat of the watercress darter. Photo by Daniel Drennan.



Hanna Burwinkle (R) from Storm Water Management Authority instructs a participant. Photo by Daniel Drennan.

"It is God's creation. When he created it to live, he put us here to assist his little critter," said Bishop Johnson who sees preserving the fish as an extension of his ministry. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Daniel Drennen, Jackson, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosts fly fishing workshop

Fly tying was in the air as were dreams of landing “the big one” as Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosted a one day introductory fly fishing course. Held on Saturday, September 2, 2007, the class drew a great crowd. More than 25 people were in attendance, and the class was held free of charge through a partnering endeavor with Trout Unlimited. The Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery also sponsored a free lunch for all participants following the event.



A father and son enjoy the day learning how to tie flies at the recent introductory fly fishing course held at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

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



Amanda Patrick instructs a group of sixth graders from Clinton County, Kentucky on how to work as a team to build an aquatic habitat through what is called a “Habitat Lap Sit.” Photo by Patty Flowers.

Busy month for Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery outreach efforts

September was a busy month for environmental education/outreach efforts at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery as Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick took to the road, helping to teach at several events. Two recent events included the first ever Russell County Ag Adventure Day. Along with several stations focusing on agriculture, Patrick spoke to all of the third graders in Russell County, Kentucky about the trout hatchery and conducted a fun class on fish adaptations. That same week, Patrick attended the annual Clinton County Soil Conservation Sixth Grade Field Day. Held annually, the event is a fun way to get all of the sixth grade students in Clinton County, Kentucky outdoors to learn more about a variety of outdoor related topics. Patrick’s station focused on aquatic habitats.

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

Fourth annual refuge photography contest a success at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge

If you ever wanted to view an array of award winning photographs, then Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge was the place to be on October 6, 2007. The fourth Annual Friends of Black Bayou Photography Contest was held in observation of National Wildlife Refuge Week. Nancy Camel, a professional nature photographer and author, was the guest speaker at the event. The contest is sponsored by Friends of Black Bayou, and they were excited to report there were 268 entries this year; an increase from the 188 they received last year. The continuing success of the photo contest couldn’t have come at a better time because this year marks the tenth anniversary of Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge.



2007 Best of Show taken by Steve Pagans who is the forester for D’Arbonne and Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuges.

Photos were entered into six categories: scenic, wildlife, birds, plants, people on refuges and close-up photography. In each category first, second, and third places and two honorable mentions were chosen. Additionally, there were ribbons given to the "Best of Show" and those who entered the youth category. All photographs were taken within the refuge complex which consists of Black Bayou Lake, D'Arbonne, Upper Ouachita, Handy Brake and Red River National Wildlife Refuges. Winning artwork was displayed at the Black Bayou Lake Visitor Center during National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Submitted by Sharon Fuller, North Louisiana Refuge Complex, Farmerville, Louisiana



Ed Black gives presentation about snakes. Photo by Elizabeth Day.

Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge holds annual open house

On September 29, Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge held its 20th open house. The public was invited to view a new exhibit, built by Wilderness Graphics, consisting of a beaver pond diorama, bird ecology; wildlife sounds quiz, and a large photo mural. The refuge's second Junior Naturalist Program featured presentations by Ed Black on snakes and Moro Bay State Park Interpreter Paul Butler who spoke about alligators, lizards, turtles and other reptiles to about 25 children. As part of this event, visitors were introduced to our new Project Leader, Bernie Petersen. Other guests included Art Stokenbury, field representative from Senator Pryor's office, Gene Higginbotham, deputy district director from Congressman Mike Ross's office and State Senator Jimmy Jeffers, 24th District. Special thanks go to KAGH/KWLT Radio, Friends of Felsenthal Volunteers, and our staff for their support and dedication to the mission and this event.

Submitted by Bernie Petersen and Elizabeth Day, Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Crossett, Arkansas

Pea Island and Alligator River "Big Sits" report 90 and 40 bird species, respectively

Sunday, October 14, was designated by Birdwatchers' Digest as the day for the most "sedentary birding" of the year. Around the world, birders chose their 17' diameter circles, placed their lawn chairs, spotting scopes, coolers and lunch boxes, and racked back for a long day in the great outdoors! Pea Island's Big Sit Team, led by Jeff Lewis, reported 90 species of birds - likely setting a new North Carolina record. On the Alligator River Big Sit, 40 bird species were seen, along with 8 black bears and a bobcat! At this writing, with 29 circles reporting from a total of 191 circles registered for the event, Pea Island was maintaining its place as first for the state and third for the world!

"Though it is unlikely Pea Island's count will maintain its current international position, it will likely be one of the top ten species lists for the 2007 event. And, it will probably end up in first place for the state," Bonnie Strawser, Interpretive Specialist for the refuges.



Mike and Peggy Eubank and Marlene Schumm scan the fields of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge for birds as a part of the International Big Sit.

Visit <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/results07/stats.php> to monitor results as they are submitted.

In all, at least 17 people participated in the two North Carolina Big Sits. For more information about the event, visit <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx>.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Manteo, North Carolina



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey crew. Photograph courtesy of Jason Wisniewski, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Former SCEP students reunite to help survey for listed mussel species

Generations of former Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) students came together in Holly Creek of the Conasauga River Basin to survey for imperiled mussels. This stretch of Holly Creek is enrolled in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, through the Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Office to be a future riparian habitat restoration project. The SCEP mussel survey team included "mussel goddess" Alice Lawrence (SCEP in 2001); "gorgeous blonde" Karen Herrington (2005); "handsome devil" Will Duncan (2007), "ever so lovely" Robin Goodloe (1991); and Eric "the barbarian" Prowell (2006). The Georgia Ecological Services Office, The Panama City Fisheries Resources Office, and the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Georgia Department of Transportation and Georgia Department of Natural Resources collected and identified five species of mussels, including the federally threatened fine-lined pocketbook (*Hamiota altilis*) and the federally endangered southern pigtoe (*Pleurobema georgianum*). Additionally, a valve of the federally endangered Coosa moccasinshell (*Medionidus*

parvulus) was found. The southern pigtoe was previously unknown from this study area.

Submitted by Will Duncan, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office

Southeast Region Invasive Species Strike Team Leader assists State partners with eradication efforts for the exotic purple swamphen or 'Pukeko'



SFWMD airboat operator Danny Walsh holding a mature purple swamphen. Photos courtesy of Bill Thomas, Jr., FWS and Neil Larson, SFWMD.

Invasive Species Strike Team Leader Bill Thomas, Jr. assisted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) with ongoing efforts to eradicate the exotic purple swamphen from state-managed Storm Water Treatment Areas (STAs) located adjacent to A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR, the Everglades Agricultural Area and Lake Okeechobee. The colorful but non-native purple swamphen was first detected in a subdivision west of Ft. Lauderdale in 1996, and has expanded its range west and north towards the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and Lake Okeechobee. Initial surveys conducted by the FWC and SFWMD had pegged the fledgling swamphen population at 100-200 birds identifying the species as an ideal candidate for a multi-agency, rapid response campaign. However, since the commencement of eradication efforts in October 2006, more than 1,200 purple swamphens have been humanely and safely harvested from various STAs and WCA-2B. Management efforts are coordinated cooperatively between the FWC and SFWMD.



Bill Thomas, Jr. with harvested purple swamphens. Photos courtesy of Bill Thomas, Jr., FWS and Neil Larson, SFWMD.

Alligator National Wildlife Refuge completes Creef Cut Wildlife Trail

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge has just completed a new boardwalk on Creef Cut Wildlife Trail. In partnership with the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society (CWRS), the National Park Service (NPS), and the North Carolina State Trails Program, the Fish and Wildlife Service accomplished the unimaginable, including materials and labor, to construct 587 linear feet of a 6-foot-wide boardwalk and a bridge (fully ADA compliant). We also revised and purchased 100,000 copies of the Charles Kuralt Trail leaflet, purchased and installed 16 interpretive panels with frames, and obtained a commitment of volunteers for routine maintenance of the trail. NPS provided engineering services and oversight for the project. CWRS contributed funding, purchased materials, and contracted the labor. The in-kind match for the \$32,250 State Trails Grant included over \$5,000 in volunteer hours. The single factor which made this project possible was the Society's ability to locate and contract local talent with the skills to do the job. The total cost of the Creef Cut Wildlife Trail project to the government (FWS) was \$5,000. The total cost of the project was under \$50,000.



Scott Lanier, refuge deputy project leader, and contractor Jeff Harris on the new bridge during final inspection. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, Manteo, North Carolina



Great egret (breeding plumage), Ted Ford PFW project, Colleton County, South Carolina. Photo by Jason Ayers

Wood stork habitat improvement at Little Cypress Plantation

Wetlands on Little Cypress Plantation are getting some extra special attention thanks to the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Located in the ACE Basin on a tributary of the Salkehatchie River in Colleton County, South Carolina, Little Cypress Plantation was formerly a mill pond. However, the plantation now serves as an important rookery for the wood stork, federally listed as endangered, as well as a variety of other wading birds. Since 2002, Little Cypress has hosted approximately 850 wood stork nests.

Nutrients from the rookery caused excessive growth of aquatic vegetation in the pond, forming mats on the water surface and providing a substrate for other vegetation. Maintaining an open water situation was necessary for the continued survival of the rookery so, with assistance from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the pond is being treated with the appropriate aquatic herbicide. The Service's program provides funding for half of the cost of the herbicide application and the landowner pays the remaining half. So, not only do hundreds of endangered species have a great place to call home during the nesting season, one landowner has been made very happy by the success of his project!



Wood storks on nest, Ted Ford PFW project, Colleton County, South Carolina. Photo by Jason Ayers.

Submitted by Jennifer Koches, Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office



New administration building, still under construction, for National Key Deer Refuge. Photo by James Bell.

Fifty years of conservation: National Key Deer Refuge marks a milestone

August 22 marked the 50th anniversary of the official establishment of the National Key Deer Refuge in 1957. Centered on Big Pine Key and surrounding islands, the National Key Deer Refuge protects native habitats that support the Key deer and 21 other threatened and endangered species. The battle to save the diminutive Key deer began long before the refuge's establishment. On November 17, the public is invited to join refuge staff and volunteers to celebrate 50 years of conservation when they host a gathering from 4 – 7 p.m. at the Watson Boulevard administrative site on Big Pine Key. The refuge staff will welcome old and new friends to share stories about the past and present, feature a premiere showing of a Jack Watson biographical video, and cut a ribbon to open the reconstructed office building. Refreshments will be served.

The open space and natural areas that both residents and visitors cherish today in the Lower Keys persists primarily because of the foresight of those who came before us to create the National Key Deer Refuge. Congress authorized the initial purchase of 1,000 acres on Big Pine Key to establish the National Key Deer Refuge, dedicated on August 22, 1957. Now, fifty years later and millions of dollars spent on land acquisition to date, the National Key Deer Refuge has grown to more than 8,500 acres, creating a patchwork of small and large tracts of pine rockland forest, hardwood hammocks, mangroves, freshwater wetlands and coastal marshes. The Refuge also encompasses more than 75,000 acres of state waters co-managed to support refuge objectives. The Key deer population has rebounded from near extinction to more than 600 animals. Three-quarters of the deer population is found on Big Pine and No Name Keys, with smaller numbers of deer ranging from the Johnson Keys to Sugarloaf Key.

Submitted by Anne Morkill, National Key Deer Wildlife Refuge, Big Pine Key, Florida

Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge hosts first pioneer day

On October 6, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge was transformed into earlier times. The Friends of Noxubee Refuge members manned stations with cross-cut sawing, quill and ink making, wood bowl carving, tomahawk throwing, birch bark canoe making, and other activities. Also, the Mississippi State University Department of Archaeology had a display of items found on the refuge, along with some information about where they fit into a timeline. There was Dutch-oven cooking with wonderful aromas wafting through the pines. Around 150 visitors enjoyed the good food and activities while learning about early settlers in the area.



The Dutch-oven cooking was a hit with everyone. Photo by Andrea Dunstan.

Submitted by Andrea Dunstan, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, Brooksville, Mississippi

Hats Off --



Members of the public review various proposals for restoration of the Lacassine Pool. FWS Photo.

Louisiana project leader applauds completion of three comprehensive conservation plans

Comprehensive conservation planning has been a huge workload on the staffs of the four national wildlife refuges that comprise the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Veteran Project Leader Don Voros provides supervision and management responsibility for Lacassine, Cameron Prairie, Sabine, and Shell Keys National Wildlife Refuges. Three of the four refuges in the Complex can proudly state their comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) are complete and approved. Only tiny Shell Keys still needs an approved CCP.

In mid-September of 2005, the Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge CCP was nearly complete. Complex Project Leader Don Voros, Biologist Steve Reagan, and Planner Judy McClendon traveled to the Regional Office in Atlanta on September 20, to brief Refuge Chief Jon Andrew and other management personnel on the status of the plan, which was about to go out for public review. Little did anyone know that just a few days later, southwestern Louisiana would be struck with a massive Category 3 hurricane, disrupting the CCP schedule and causing tremendous damage to habitat and structures to the four refuges in the Complex. For months, the staff went into a recovery mode, assessing damages, acquiring temporary offices, and seeking funding and partnerships to restore and repair facilities and equipment. Although many on the staff of the refuge complex dealt with the heartache of losing their homes to the ravages of Hurricane Rita, much progress was made in the months to follow. However, planning took a short break from the more pressing needs associated with recovery.

Cameron Prairie is the headquarters for the complex and its plan set some goals and strategies for a more efficient complex organization. Following the hurricane, Cameron Prairie's 15-year comprehensive conservation plan was approved in March of 2006. Regional management staff used this plan as a guide to determine how to reassign staff, priorities, and resources from among the three major refuges in the complex to more efficiently address the problems at hand.

The Lacassine plan was re-evaluated and many sections were rewritten after the hurricane. Many of the issues that had surfaced during development of the plan dealt with the health and proper management of the Lacassine Pool, an incredibly important ecosystem for waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife on the refuge. An innovative plan to restore the pool to a thriving, healthy ecosystem had been crafted by the Service and the public and was described in the draft version. When the Lacassine CCP was approved in May of 2007, it was immediately used to justify and obtain construction permits, set priorities for recovery projects, and implement improvements to refuge programs, including restoration of the Lacassine Pool.

Sabine National Wildlife Refuge took the brunt of damages from Hurricane Rita. Destroyed offices, public use facilities, and massive piles of debris from the small communities south of the refuge impacted the coastal marsh habitat. The refuge was immediately closed to all use until the area was safe for the public and habitat restoration could begin. Sabine's plan was not as complete as the other two at the time of the hurricane, and a decision was made to rewrite many of the goals, objectives, and strategies to develop both short-term and long-term strategies in the plan to restore, repair, and reopen the refuge. In September of 2007, Sabine's CCP was approved. The CCP contains valuable historical data about the hurricane and its effect on the refuge and is a concise blueprint to reclaim the refuge as an important and valuable Gulf Coast ecosystem.

When Voros became Project Leader in April of 2004, he was adept in balancing the fast-paced day-to-day details of managing the

staffs and their respective refuges. In September of 2005, he already had a full-time job without throwing in a comprehensive conservation planning mandate and a Category 3 hurricane. Voros has kept a positive outlook, managing hundreds of clean-up and restoration projects and providing oversight and direction to complete and implement the three CCP's. His reaction? He recently stated the plans were invaluable tools to help deal with the aftermath of a catastrophic event that he hopes only happens once in his career. When the Shell Keys CCP is approved, he will be ready for a well-deserved break!

Submitted by Judy McClendon, Central Arkansas Refuges, Augusta, Arkansas

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists honored for service to MSTWS

The Mississippi Chapter of the Wildlife Society (MSTWS) held its annual meeting at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in Jackson on October 4-5. The meeting was a great success with over 75 attendees. The entertainment for the evening social was provided by Dr. Ed Jones as Aldo Leopold in "Reflections from the Shack." Dr. Ed Jones is Associate Director of Agricultural Programs for the North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension Service. On Friday, officers were awarded with plaques to honor their dedicated service. Among the honorees were Service biologists Shauna Ginger, executive board member and David Richardson, secretary-treasurer.



L to R: MSTWS officers: Kevin Nelms, Shauna Ginger, Daryl Jones, and Jeff Duguay are honored for their dedicated service to the MSTWS. Photo by Sabrina Chandler

Submitted by Sabrina Chandler, Jackson, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office

The "Ding" Girls

These pictures was taken at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge's "Ding" Darling Days celebration on October 14, 2007, in Sanibel, Florida.



L to R: Julie Hiller, office assistant; Traci Hameetman, clerk (in back.); Toni Westland, park ranger and education specialist, with her daughter Sophia; and Linda Patton, park ranger. Photo by Margot Bissel, FWS, Cabeza Prieta, Arizona.



"Ding" girls with the Secretary of the Interior: L to R: Linda Patton, park ranger; Margot Bissell, park ranger, Region 2, Cabeza Prieta, Arizona; Cheryl Parrott, intern (back row); Toni Westland, park ranger; Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne; Patti Bennett-Taylor, administrative officer; Julie Hiller, office assistant; Traci Hameetman, clerk; and Joyce Mazourek, wildlife biologist. FWS Photo.

Photo Album --

One church becomes steward to a rare fish -- all photos by Daniel Drennen -- more photos



Teaching water quality techniques inside the sanctuary.



The standard Alabama Water Watch kit donated by Alabama Water Watch.



Photo of class participants.

Visitor Services --

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge celebrates National Hunting and Fishing Day



John Tarver teaches how to handle a rifle during target practice. Photo by Amanda Wilkinson.

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge hosted its annual celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day on Saturday, September 22, 2007. In an effort to promote the Service's "Children and Nature" initiative, the event focused on activities for youth that support the education and appreciation of outdoor recreation and conservation. More than 1,000 people attended, as families scattered the Visitor Center grounds participating in the festivities. The morning was filled with hands on activities for the youth, such as skeet shooting, BB shooting, and archery. Other activities included the Home Depot's "Kids Zone", that allowed kids to build bird houses, plant boxes and more. Staff gathered live animals for display including several snakes, alligators and fish. The highlight of the day was the registration and selection process for Tensas River's annual Youth Lottery Hunt.



Bayou State Bowhunters Association representative teaches class how to use a bow and arrow. Photo by Amanda Wilkinson.

The event featured several exhibitors including the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Poverty Point Reservoir State Park, The Nature Conservancy, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Louisiana Trappers Association. Other Service offices also participated in the event including the Natchitoches Fish hatchery, the Lafayette Ecological Services Office, and Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge.



Young girl fishing for frogs. Photo by Amanda Wilkinson.



The Ivory-billed woodpecker makes a special appearance. FWS photo.

Wage Grade Profile --

Dale Welker: The "backbone" of Cross Creeks



Dale's carpentry skills keep refuge facilities such as the kiosk and other buildings in top notch condition. Photo by Sarah Welker.

James Dale Welker's official title at Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge is Maintenance Mechanic, but, the list of actual jobs he has performed over a career of over 29 years at the refuge is endless and varied. Dale operates any type of equipment that has a motor, and if it doesn't run, he can fix it.

"Since my first day on the job, I knew this is what I wanted to do," says Dale.

Just some of the jobs Dale performs include handling the farming program, installing culverts, dealing with hunters and landowners, performing carpentry, electrical, and plumbing tasks, running the wood duck banding program, maintaining signs, and grading refuge roads. When asked to pick up SAMMS duties, Dale tackled that with gusto, he was at the forefront of getting the refuge database up and running ahead of schedule.



Dale demonstrated waterfowl capture and banding procedures to visitors during the Centennial Celebration at Cross Creeks. Photo

With a genuine concern for natural resources and a desire to do a quality job for the refuge, Dale plays a pivotal role in the day to day management of the refuge. Along with receiving numerous performance awards over the years, Dale was the recipient of a Regional Director's Award in 1994.



Dale Welker puts the new back hoe to work completing the parking lot paving project. Photo by Sarah Welker.

Dale is a lifelong resident of Dover, Tennessee, and has a son, Wendell, who lives in North Carolina with his family. Dale and Sarah and her son Justin enjoy antiquing, cruising in Dale's classic cars, and caring for a few cows and horses on their farm.

Submitted by Sarah Welker, Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge, Dover, Tennessee