



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

APRIL 2008 NEWSLETTER

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US FWS photo.

Let's Go Outside!

Every day, dedicated Fish and Wildlife Service staff members share their passion for nature with the public. We offer environmental education programs, outdoor recreation opportunities, and facilities where people can enjoy the things that we work so hard to protect. But our culture is changing, and despite our efforts and the best efforts of our partners, more people are growing up without a lasting connection to nature.

This represents a major challenge to the future of conservation. People will only protect what they value. Yet we need the support of the public to carry out our mission. To address this challenge, the Service has made it a priority to connect people with nature. The initiative is called "Let's Go Outside."

Led by the National Conservation Training Center, a national team is creating tools for field stations. National partnerships are being developed that will create opportunities to better communicate the work that we do and magnify our efforts. Here in the Southeast a team has developed a regional plan. As "Let's Go Outside" develops, we will share new ideas about how to help key audiences make life-long nature connections.

This month marks the very first Children and Nature Month. Throughout this special edition, Southeast Region staff share stories about connecting people with nature. We hope you will find inspiration and ideas from these stories.

Why should the Service help connect people with nature?

Building a future constituency. As Rachel Carson pointed out 50 years ago, forming an emotional bond with nature is the foundation of understanding and acting on behalf of nature. If we want the work we do today to be sustained by future generations, we have to develop a citizenry who will care about conservation in the future

We know nature. Who knows nature better than the Service? Because of our dedicated and knowledgeable staff and vast land base, we are in an ideal position to help people connect with nature.

Taking advantage of the movement. There is a powerful social movement spreading across the country to get children back outside. Parents, educators, researchers, and health advocates are realizing that nature can improve children's health. The Service can play a leading role in this movement.

Top 8 things you can do now as part of Let's Go Outside

1. Read the [key messages](#). Use them in your existing outreach and programs.
2. Visit the [Children and Nature Network's](#) website. Find the latest information about the "Leave No Child Inside" movement spreading across the country. Skim through the two volumes of research abstracts that provide the evidence that nature is good for your health. Find the latest news stories and connect with partners who are also making this a priority. Start and register your own community movement.
3. Read "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv. Recommend this book to others.
4. Having an event in April that targets children or families? Register your event as a Children and Nature Month event at www.cnaturenet.org.
5. Visit the [Let's Go Outside](#) website. This site is evolving, and currently contains fact sheets for your use and features stories about the Service connecting people with nature.
6. How are you connecting people with nature? Share stories and photos with members of the regional [Connecting People with Nature Team](#).
7. Read the [Southeast Region's plan](#). The Director tasked each region to form a team and develop a regional plan. This plan has just been completed.
8. Participate in the Southeast Region Connecting People with Nature Team. A small team was appointed by the ARDs to develop the regional plan. Now that a plan has been developed, we need your help to make it happen. If you want to participate, contact Kyla Hastie or Garry Tucker.



Vieques NWR -- Baby turtles.
USFWS photo.

Stay tuned. The regional and national teams are working on a graphic element, exhibits and banners, a regional discussion forum, and a coordinated communications campaign. And don't forget to check under the "Visitor Services" section of E-grits each month for updates on what is happening with "Let's Go Outside."

Have questions, comments, or a good idea? Contact Kyla Hastie (706-613-9493 x234 or kyla_hastie@fws.gov), Garry Tucker (404-679-7356 or garry_tucker@fws.gov), or any member of the [Connecting People with Nature Regional Team](#).

Behind the Scenes--



Dirt Farm Logo by Tony Gooch.

Gracie Gooch's Dirt Farm

Most people know Gracie Gooch as the energetic volunteer coordinator at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. She nurtures a dynamic volunteer program at the refuge that serves as a model across the nation. Each year, volunteers wait in anticipation to see if they get selected for one of the prized RV pads in Volunteer Village. Gracie began her career at Okefenokee while still in high school as part of the Youth Conservation Corps program. She has worked for the refuge almost 25 years. Her husband Tony also spent his career at Okefenokee, retiring in 2006 after 26 years as the station's automotive mechanic.

In Gracie's spare time, you can probably find her helping Tony and their children, Maggie and Jordan, at The Dirt Farm. Fast becoming one of this area's hottest motocross race tracks, The Dirt Farm offers motocross tracks and ATV trails, a sand drag strip, and a Super PeeWee track. Participants will find an RV campground, parts and repair shop, and a concession for snacks. Tony also offers a Motorcycle Safety Dirt Bike School for beginners.

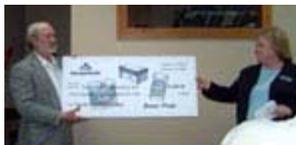
Check out the action on their website at: <http://www.powersportz.com>. Stop by and visit next time you're at the Swamp!



The Dirt Track. Photo by Tony Gooch.

Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, Georgia

Bragging Rights --



The \$1,000 check. Photo by Elizabeth Day.

Friends of Felsenthal receive donation from Georgia Pacific

The Friends of Felsenthal received a \$1,000 donation to help fund two related projects for the Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge. The two projects will remove nuisance vegetation from the 15,000-acre Felsenthal Pool. The density of this vegetation renders about 60 percent of the pool unusable to anglers. First, the pool will be stocked with triploid grass carp, and then herbicide treatments will be applied. It is hoped these two efforts will be the start of reclaiming this valuable resource. Other cooperators for this

project include the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, as well as numerous local businesses, fishing clubs, and individuals from all over southern Arkansas.

Submitted by Elizabeth Day, Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Crossett, Arkansas

Friends of Felsenthal host banquet for the President of Georgia Pacific, a branch of KOCH Industries

Friends of Felsenthal hosted a banquet on February 19, 2008, honoring Jim Hanna, the new President and CEO of Georgia Pacific. Forty-eight distinguished guests from the Crossett and Atlanta branches of Georgia Pacific were invited to the banquet at Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge. The Mayor of Crossett presented Hanna a key to the City of Crossett. The Governor of Arkansas sent Hanna the story and certificate of the Arkansas Traveler. Cormier's Cajun Catering provided the meal, and the University of Monticello Hospitality Committee served the guests.

Submitted by Elizabeth Day, Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Crossett, Arkansas



Jim Hanna. Photo by Elizabeth Day.



Junior Naturalist program at Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Elizabeth Day.

Where's the food?

Ruth MacDonald of Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge hosted a Junior Naturalist program on Saturday, February 16, 2008. Children learned how to make bird houses and bird feeders using two-liter coke bottles. Junior Naturalist Michaila New showed the children how to make a food chain by using rope and having the children act as various animals, plants, earth, wind, and sky. A basic demonstration was given on using a compass. For nine months, The Junior Naturalist Program is hosted every third Saturday of each month at the refuge.

Submitted by Elizabeth Day, Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Crossett, Arkansas

Water ditching and survival training

Glenn Cullingford and Meg Gallagher are Interagency Aviation Training Instructors for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who have been barnstorming the Southeast Region this winter. Meg and Glenn have been teaching the Water Ditching and Survival Course to employees whose duties require flights over open water beyond gliding distance from shore. The one-day course covers situational awareness and techniques for improving the chances of surviving a crash or landing in water – shallow or deep. In early February, about 20 Southeast Region wildland firefighters, environmental contaminants spill responders, and ecological services staff attended the course in Brunswick, Georgia. We were briefed with textbook basics, and multi-media and real-life stories in the classroom lessons, then moved to the pool for the



Splashdown! Two students take the plunge in the IAT Water Ditching and Survival Course. Photo by Anthony Velasco.

ditching and survival exercises to round out the course. Helpful guidance from patient instructors reduced most of the anxiety before we latched our seat restraints, and we made it through all of the confidence-testing exercises. Somehow the concept of being strapped into a tight cage and being shoved head-first into the depths doesn't seem so daunting any more! The new insights and knowledge we picked up have better prepared us for safe exit and survival in the event of an emergency water landing. Thanks Meg and Glenn! More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Anthony Velasco, Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office, Frankfort, Kentucky



Student from Tice Elementary reading new fishing line etiquette. Photo by Toni Westland.

What do you do with fishing-line?

At the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, students visiting the refuge for environmental education programs learn about the importance of keeping snagged and discarded monofilament fishing-line out of the environment. Nine new signs were installed at fishing sites around the refuge describing how to properly discard fishing-line in order to prevent injury to wildlife. The birds and wildlife introduced to kids on the Wildlife Drive tour are then connected to the importance of cleaning up fishing-line. Ding Darling additionally hosts four youth fishing events each year in a partnership with the refuge's concession, Tarpon Bay Explorers.

Submitted by Toni Westland, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, Florida

Service and NRCS leverage resources to restore habitat in the Caribbean

Doing more with less its easy to say but hard to do...so what do you do? Find a friend to help you carry the load. That is exactly what the Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) decided to do in Puerto Rico. On February 27, 2008, a local agreement was signed between the Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office and the NRCS' Caribbean Office to coordinate financial and technical assistance for private land-owners. The agreement will avoid duplication of efforts, and maximize economic resources for conservation in the Caribbean. Three Service programs are rolled into this agreement: Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Coastal, and Endangered Species Programs.

"This it is a great opportunity to join forces to promote conservation on private lands by effectively using the Service's technical expertise and the NRCS financial powerhouse," said Edwin Muñiz, Caribbean Field Office supervisor. "We have operated a full year with this kind of shared vision, and the results have been so positive we decided to formalize the agreement."



NRCS and FWS staff conducting a site visit in a private land in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico. Photo by C. Pacheco.

During FY 2007, the Caribbean Ecological Service Field Office provided technical assistance to 12 private land-owners, after the Service identified a potential for habitat restoration and enhancement. NRCS paid about \$220,000 for implementing the restoration.

The Service will provide technical assistance with implementing the Farm Bill Programs; seek opportunities to streamline informal Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation for NRCS; and identify mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of conservation practices in protecting and improving species and their habitat. In turn, NRCS will coordinate technical assistance with FWS on conservation, protection and enhancement of species and their habitat. In addition, NRCS will coordinate joint site visits to identify conservation practices needed to protect, restore, develop or enhance wildlife habitat within private lands and expedite consultation under the ESA.

Submitted by Silmarie Padron, Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office, Boqueron, Puerto Rico



These professionals came together to set the pace for wildlife conservation in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia for the coming years. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

Strategic Habitat Conservation in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia

On February 27-28, a group of more than 40 professional biologists, ecologists, managers, and outreach specialists met at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Their purpose was to kick-start Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) in the northeastern North Carolina/southeastern Virginia SHC Team work area (formerly the Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear Ecoteam work area). A two-day workshop was conducted to educate staff and USGS partners on the strategic habitat conservation framework; outline current national, regional and SHC team activities, and participate in a workshop activity to begin identifying biological planning information on migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and inter-jurisdictional fishes.

Additional details will be provided in next month's issue of E-Grits-- so stay tuned to learn more about this event that is "The Right Stuff in the Right Places at the Right Time" for wildlife conservation in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia!



Pete Campbell of the Raleigh, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office delivers the national perspective on SHC. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

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



Participants in the second bluebird workshop for 2008. Photo by Andrea Dunstan.

Bluebird workshops connect children to nature

Two bluebird workshops are offered annually at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. At these workshops children of all ages are encouraged to become more active in birding by building and taking home a bluebird box. These bluebird workshops have been consistently popular and this year was no exception. The workshop consists of an information session and a video on bluebird behavior and how to manage a bluebird nest box. The boxes assembled are made of cypress so they will weather well. The boxes are pre-cut and pre-drilled, so even the youngest participants can hammer the nails where they need to go.

The only cost to the attendees is a group photo at the end of the workshop of the builders and their boxes.

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

25 years of cooperative conservation for Gulf striped bass

For 25 years, representatives from Alabama, Florida, Georgia and the Service have worked for the protection and restoration of Gulf striped bass in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River System. The genetically unique Gulf strain of striped bass was once common to rivers of the Gulf of Mexico, but its population declined significantly due to poor water quality and habitat loss. Twenty-five years ago, representatives gathered to formulate a plan for Gulf striped bass restoration in the ACF. The group has met every year since and has just celebrated its 25th year! As a result, knowledge of the life history has improved and essential coolwater habitats have been protected or rehabilitated. A large cooperative stocking program was implemented, and anglers have set new records. This work has been a catalyst for striped bass restoration throughout the Gulf region.



Gail Carmody, project leader of the Panama City, Florida, Ecological Services Field Office, presents awards during the 25th Annual Workshop for Gulf Striped Bass. Photo by Karen Herrington.

Submitted by Karen Herrington, Panama City Ecological Services/Fisheries Field Office, Panama City, Florida



Mallard ducks being released at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge by Arkansas State University, Wildlife Management students and refuge staff. Pictured from left to right are Jeremy Moore, Wapanocca NWR; Aaron Mize, Big Lake NWR; six ASU Wildlife Management students; and Jeremy Bennett, Big Lake NWR. Photo by Larry Towell.

Many hands make light work and a learning experience at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge

For the first time in its 99-year history, Arkansas State University, located in Jonesboro, Arkansas, has offered Waterfowl Ecology and Management as a course available to undergraduate students majoring in Wildlife Management. Just down the road from Jonesboro in Manila, refuge staff at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge recognized a unique opportunity to connect the students with hands-on experience in waterfowl management activities that are ongoing at the refuge.

Throughout the winter months Refuge Manager Jeremy Bennett and Biological Technician Aaron Mize had been conducting H5N1 avian influenza monitoring at Big Lake. Sampling had been limited to oral-pharyngeal and cloacal swabbing of hunter harvested birds; however, a slow end to the waterfowl season in northeast Arkansas left Bennett and Mize short of the sampling goal. To complete the monitoring effort, the Waterfowl Management and Ecology class was invited to assist in rocket netting operations to capture and swab live mallards.

With nearly 200 mallards feeding regularly at the rocket net site baited with shelled corn, the timing was right to attempt a shot of the net. Well before sunrise on a cold and frosty Arkansas morning, Mize quietly led the students through the dark to the prepared rocket net. In the glimmer of the first morning light, the silhouettes of countless mallards could be made out already feeding on the bait. With a countdown of, "three, two, one" the rocket net was fired in a loud explosion over the unsuspecting mallards. The net

had shot over, and landed on, more than enough ducks to fulfill the refuges avian flu sampling goal for the year.

For the remainder of the morning Bennett and Mize worked closely with the students teaching proper handling techniques, removal of tangled birds from the net, avian flu sampling procedures and protocol, and how to attach metal leg bands. While the students gained invaluable hands on experience in waterfowl management, the small two person staff at Big Lake NWR, gained the assistance of many hands to make light work in accomplishing a refuge goal.

Submitted by Aaron Mize, Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Manila, Arkansas

Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility completed

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Service's Red Wolf Recovery Program, in partnership with the Red Wolf Coalition, opened the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility on March 5, 2008. The building is on the refuge along North Carolina Highway 94, about a mile south of Columbia, North Carolina, and will eventually include indoor exhibits about red wolves and the wolf restoration program, an informational outdoor kiosk, and enclosures for holding live red wolves. Service biologists and cooperating veterinarians also will utilize the site for animal processing and procedures, such as implanting or attaching tracking devices, treating injuries, health checks, vaccinations, and performing minor surgeries. The health care portion of the facility will not normally be open to the public due to its veterinary nature and the need to ensure the safety of the public, staff and animals.



Front and side view of the building with its garage. Photo by Ryan Nordsven.

The project contractor, Belles Enterprises, Inc., donated a 4' x 6' identification sign for the front of the building. The public will be invited to an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony after interior fixtures and displays are installed.



Red wolf facility. Photo by Ryan Nordsven.

Submitted by Diane Hendry, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge conducts successful tours

Twenty-five tours were given to visitors at Bon Secour NWR in February and March. These guided opportunities are a popular venue at the refuge, and each tour filled quickly.

Tour opportunities included birding tours, nature hikes, and dune ecology tours along different refuge trails. Visitors were invited to explore the maritime forest and adjacent lagoon, discover different species of plants and wildlife in the transition from maritime forest to dune swales and swamps, walk along dune



Emily Neidigh and tour group at Little Lagoon. Photo by Lisa Nordsven.

ridges, and explore the plants and wildlife of an intact dune ecosystem.

Staff and volunteers led the tours, introducing visitors from all over the United States and Canada to one of the most important resting places for neotropical migrants along the gulf coast. Visitors also got the opportunity to learn about the hurricane impacts on the refuge and view the results of a massive clean up operation after Hurricane Ivan.

These tours are instrumental in reaching out to the surrounding communities and the tourists wintering along the gulf coast. Another important side effect of these tours is the volunteers the refuge attracts. The refuge is highly dependent on volunteers to staff the headquarters and keep it open, as well as to continue necessary resource management.

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



Crane calling. Photo by Ute Bradner.

Crane tours popular at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

Crane Tours resumed in January and February at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. Since not many tours have run since Katrina, this winter's announcement of crane tours attracted a lot of public attention. The tours were booked almost immediately after being advertised in newspapers..

Tours at the refuge were lead primarily by volunteers. They took the vanload of guests on to the refuge to give them a closer look at an elusive bird. Guides were able to take them to the release pens where several birds were housed and into areas of the refuge and adjacent lands where cranes were found. Visitors got to view the new refuge video, learn about crane biology and about the captive rearing project. The volunteers and visitors were instrumental in being a part of the crane monitoring program, as well. Records from their observations were given to the biological program. Many tour visitors were local families, but the tours attracted visitors from California, overseas, the Sierra Club, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, homeschool and scout groups. Tours were available Tuesdays and Saturdays in January and February.

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

Big Lakes partnership helps students learn about reforestation

The staff at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge has partnered with Buffalo Island Central High School's JAKES program of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The Buffalo Island Central JAKES Chapter located in Monette, Arkansas is 100 student members strong and is still growing. The group recently donated more than 200 oak saplings to the refuge to enhance wildlife habitat. Future activities have been planned with the NWTF at Big Lake including a "Women in the Outdoors Day" in June and a "JAKES Event" in July.



Refuge Manager Jeremy Bennett works with the JAKES to plant the trees while teaching reforestation techniques and the importance of bottom land hardwoods. Photo by Revis Blaylock.

Submitted by Aaron Mize, Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Manila, Arkansas



Thanks to the efforts of Erwin National Fish Hatchery, these first graders can proudly display their official Biologist-in-Training certificates and patches. Photo by Jaclyn Wilson.

Tennessee Little BiTs

Erwin National Fish Hatchery is good at bringing things to life. The hatchery produces 10 million disease-free eggs annually for federal, state, and tribal hatcheries to support their fishery management efforts, as well as to research centers and universities for research purposes. The hatchery also has more than 40,000 visitors every year.

Now Erwin is leading the way in bringing the Fisheries Program's Biologist-in-Training (BiT) program to life. Ms. Wilson's entire first grade class at Unaka Elementary in Elizabethton, Tennessee, recently joined the ranks of the hundreds of official Biologists-in-Training across the region. Learn more about Erwin NFH at www.fws.gov/southeast/erwin. For more information on BiT, visit www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/bit.

"The program was a wonderful learning experience for the students," said Ms. Wilson. "Thank you for a very interesting and fun way to teach about fish and their habitats."

Submitted by Judy Toppins, Fisheries, Atlanta, Georgia

Southeast Region fisheries program launches unique environmental education program

The Southeast Region Fisheries Program has launched an exciting program offering children the opportunity to have meaningful interactions with fish and aquatic habitats. The Biologist-in-Training program is an experiential environmental education curriculum that utilizes National Fish Hatcheries and streams, lakes, ponds and rivers as outdoor classrooms.



Aquatic lap sit activity at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. FWS Photo.

An engaging 20-page activity booklet guides children through five outdoor, interactive explorations of fish and aquatic environments. Each of the activities promotes stewardship and the intrinsic value of aquatic habitats, builds skills of observation, and teaches different methods of acquiring, organizing, and assessing biological information. In the final activity, children will link with a mentor in the field of biology. Upon completion of the activities, students will receive an official certificate of accomplishment and a sticker or patch. This incentive provides a sense of pride, ownership, and empowerment to help conserve and protect our local aquatic resources.

The BiT program may be accomplished in a day at any National Fish Hatchery in the Southeast, but also anywhere that water flows. The activities are aligned with national education standards for upper elementary age students; however, the program is designed to be open-ended and adaptable for lower elementary and middle school students. It is ideal for school groups, home school groups, Scout groups, 4-H groups, and all children with a sense of wonder.



Students play Go Fish, a BIT extension activity. FWS Photo.

The BiT program also includes extension activities based on nationally recognized environmental education curricula. The extension activities come ready-to-use in BiT bins that contain all the necessary props and materials to get students outside and in the stream! They may be used during a visit to the hatchery, or borrowed for use at a school or another off-site location.

All of the materials listed above, including BiT activity guides, BiT bins, and achievement awards are available at 21 Fisheries field stations across the Southeast.

For more information on the new Biologist-in-Training program, visit www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/BiT or contact Judy Toppins, program coordinator, at 404/ 679-7108.

Submitted by Judy Toppins, Fisheries Program, Atlanta, Georgia

Getting kids in the creek to save endangered fish and mussels

Protecting listed aquatic species is especially challenging since they are susceptible to the actions of numerous landowners living upstream. A solid public understanding of the importance of stream ecosystems and how they are impacted is key to the recovery of these species. Combining a strategic approach to environmental education with an effort to get children outdoors, the Service's Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office focuses on providing field experiences for children living in watersheds with listed aquatic species.

For Endangered Species Day on May 16, Service biologists will lead a local high school's Eco-Club on a rafting trip through habitat occupied by the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. The school sits on North Carolina's Cane River with elktoe mussels immediately downstream. In the past two years, biologists have led this club in macroinvertebrate sampling, and helped them partner with a local watershed group to monitor water quality at three sites in the river basin.

The Service led macroinvertebrate sampling efforts by all the sixth and seventh graders at a neighboring middle school; assisted a neighboring river basin's watershed group in getting more than 2,000 students into streams to study water quality over the past three years; and provided teacher training on measuring basic hydrology variables, water chemistry testing, and macroinvertebrate sampling and identification



Mountain Heritage High School Biology Teacher Gabriel Riesener tries river snorkeling. Photo by Gary Peeples.

Submitted by Gary Peeples, Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office, Asheville North Carolina



Tina and Barry Begley, representing the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc., personally met with Congressman Ed Whitfield during their attendance at the Fisheries Friends Group Conference. Photo by Kristen Moore

Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. travel to Washington, D.C.

Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. members Barry and Tina Begley attended the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Friends Group Conference held in Washington D.C., March 11-12, 2008. The national conference was an opportunity for National Fish Hatchery Friends Groups from across the country to network and share ideas.

Some of the other Friends Groups represented included the following: Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery in Washington; D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery in South Dakota; Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery in South Dakota; Pendlills Creek National Fish Hatchery in Michigan; Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin; Jordan River National Fish Hatchery in Michigan; Neosho National Fish Hatchery in Missouri; Norfolk National Fish Hatchery in Arkansas; White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery in West Virginia; and Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery in Maine.

While in Washington, D.C., the Friends representatives began organizing and thinking from a national perspective; learned about the Fisheries Program budget for 2008 and 2009 along with future program priorities, discussed forming a national association; met with Service Director Dale Hall and the Assistant Director of Fisheries Gary Frazer at the Department of Interior; and spent an afternoon on the Hill with the various Senate and Congressional representatives to discuss important issues relating to the goals of the Fisheries Program and the overall mission of the Service.

While on Capitol Hill, the Begleys met with staffers of Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Jim Bunning, and Congressman Hal Rogers. They also met personally with Congressman Ed Whitfield.

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

The Nature of Learning at Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

Whether its an annual litter pick-up day with Murray State University students or a tree-planting by high school students, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge is unearthing ways to connect youth with the environment. Perhaps, the refuge's most successful undertaking is the Nature of Learning program that has touched the lives of over 300 students from three local schools since 2004. This program is grant funded and is a partnership with the Regional Science Resource Center at Western Kentucky University. The program's main goals are to help participating teachers become more independent in environmental teaching, and to get kids involved with nature on Clarks River NWR.



Students are sampling for macroinvertebrates in the Clarks River. Photo by Andy Eller.



Volunteer, Happy Chambers, showing students how songbirds are banded. Photo by Andy Eller.

Each spring, teachers prepare the students with curriculum-based instruction associated with activities they will be engaged in while on the field trip to the refuge. On the day of the field trip, the students learn about wetland types, and their functions. They also learn about problems birds face during migration, and they observe songbird banding. Students also analyze water quality by macroinvertebrate sampling and testing pH.

During the subsequent weeks at school, students complete a follow-up stewardship activity, such as creating an activity book about nature. Each year those involved expand on ideas and help the program evolve. This year, the students will be given a disposable camera when they arrive at the refuge. After they return to the classroom, they will use the pictures they took to construct a scrapbook about their refuge experience.

A video from Nature of Learning can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVqGaE7YosU> or visit YouTube and search for "Nature of Learning Clarks River."

Submitted by Stacey Campbell, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, Benton, Kentucky

Christmas tree marsh restoration on Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge

On March 20, 2008, thousands of Christmas trees were airlifted by the Louisiana Army National Guard and deposited into the marshes of Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. The project represents a successful collaboration of several agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Louisiana Army Air National Guard; the City of New Orleans Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs; the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; Shaw Group Environmental; Jefferson Parish Environmental; and the Louisiana Audubon Nature Institute.



Trees are placed in a line to form a breakwater and retard erosion in the marsh. FWS photo.

After Christmas, the City of New Orleans collects Yuletide trees have which have been set out curbside by Orleans Parish residents. The trees are brought to Bayou Sauvage, bundled, and eventually used to help restore marsh areas of the refuge. The trees are used to establish a breakwater in open ponds, trap sediment, and foster the growth of marsh vegetation. Approximately 2,800 trees were added to the marshes. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Byron Fortier, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex, New Orleans, Louisiana

Hats Off --



Frank Bodofsky is Loxahatchee's Volunteer of the Year. Photo by Chuck Ryan.

Arthur R Marshall Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge holds awards ceremony for volunteers

On March 13, 2008, the volunteers of Loxahatchee NWR received recognition at the refuge's Annual Awards Ceremony. David Underwood, public use team leader, presented the first Volunteer of the Year Award to Frank Bodofsky. This award consists of a bronze inscription on a wooden tablet to be hung in the new Visitor Center. A significant accomplishment receiving recognition was the completion of 3,250 hours of service by four of our volunteers: Hal Alderson, Jean Poleschuck, Ruth Cogswell, and Mildred Hinkle.

The ceremony included a tour of the much anticipated Administration/Visitor Center complex, a State of the Refuge update from Deputy Project Leader Rolf Olson, and a luncheon served by refuge employees to the volunteers. A major highlight from Rolf Olson's presentation were the plans for the opening of the new Visitor Center and its exhibits.



Volunteer Day at Loxahatchee. Photo by Chuck Ryan.

Attending the Awards ceremony were many of the spouses and friends of the volunteers and most of the refuge employees. These employees are from the Park Service, South Florida Water Management

District, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and they wanted to express their whole hearted appreciation for the Best Volunteers in the World! Refuge volunteers perform many necessary services including running the Visitor Center and bookstore, helping with maintenance, providing tours to visitors, and interpreting the trails. Without them the refuge would be much poorer.

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



Arkansas State University proudly displays the image of their new mascot: the red wolf. Photo by ASU.

“Red Wolves” chosen as Arkansas State University Mascot

On March 6, 2008, Arkansas State University (ASU) revealed the new face of ASU athletics: the Red Wolves. Chancellor Robert L. Potts, announced the decision of the Mascot Selection Steering Committee to a large audience outside the Student Union. The decision to bid farewell to ASU’s Indians and Indian Family was begun about a year ago in response to NCAA sanctions.

The Committee gathered ideas for a mascot change from current students, alumni, representatives from student athletics, athletic administration representation, and members of the community. Potts remarked, “The Red Wolf is a noble species of wolf that once inhabited Arkansas and still exists in small numbers in other states. I believe that Red Wolves is the best choice...”

ASU Board of Trustees Chair Mike Gibson said, “Everybody wanted the best, and I feel like...you have come up with the best selection that anybody could find.” Shortly after these comments, and as the meeting broke up, Gibson led the assembled company of ASU administrators and their legal counsel, board members, and members of the media, in a rousing wolf howl, in a satisfactory conclusion of the laborious process.

Gibson and the assembled company weren’t the only ones howling with joy. Kim Wheeler, executive director of the Red Wolf Coalition, a nonprofit conservation group based in eastern North Carolina, wrote the following message to Chancellor Potts: “The Red Wolf Coalition, Inc., and the many supporters of red wolf conservation are thrilled and send their “howling” congratulations to ASU on your choice of the red wolf as your mascot. We consider our red wolf supporters and captive management facilities to be one big family, and we welcome the students, staff, and alumni of Arkansas State University to the family.” Over the last several months, Wheeler responded to many information requests from ASU alumni who supported the red wolf selection rather than the generic “Wolves.”

Bud Fazio, Team Leader, Red Wolf Recovery Program, conveyed congratulations and best wishes from the North Carolina USFWS office and said, “We are pleased to hear of the selection of Red Wolves as ASU’s team name and mascot. The noble red wolf occurred as a top predator in ecosystems historically in Arkansas and across the southern and eastern United States. Just as endangered red wolves encapsulate the spirit to fight and survive amidst challenges ahead, we know that same spirit of success will continue in the ASU Red Wolves for years to come.”

ASU’s athletic teams will begin competing as Red Wolves next fall at the beginning of the academic year.

Submitted by Diane Hendry, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina and from ASU Press Release information

Photo Album --

Water ditching and survival training -- more photos (All photos by Anthony Velasco.)



Students practicing the "chain" survival technique which improves visibility from the air and helps conserve heat. Photo by Anthony Velasco.



Instructor Meg Gallagher quizzes students prior to their first splash landing.



Instructor Meg Gallagher quizzing students on underwater techniques after a crash landing.



Environmental Contaminants Coordinator Bill Starkel doing a "dry run" before his first water ditching simulation.



The simulated cockpit gets pushed into the pool as several students in the pool prepare to rotate the cockpit upside down.



The simulated cockpit sinks rapidly as Instructor Glenn Cullingford (in diving mask) monitors student safety.

Christmas tree marsh restoration on Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge -- more photos



A bundle of about 40 trees is dropped into the marsh by Army National Guard helicopter. FWS Photo.



Airboats were used to unhook the cargo harnesses after the trees were dropped. Photo by Tom Carlisle. (Copyright by Tom Carlisle.)

Visitor Services --

How do we connect children with nature?



The "GET HEALTHY: GET OUTSIDE" crew from the Outer Banks Health Expo 2008. Photo by Abbey Reibel.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall has given us our 'Marching Orders'..... "Go forth and connect children with nature". What freedom that brings to the interpreters, educators, managers, biologists, ecologists, maintenance workers, equipment operators, administrators, and volunteers of the world! At least for the time being, we can throw all the goals, objectives, and lesson plans to the side. We can become children again as we think back to our long-forgotten memories of diggin' crawdads by the creek, rolling over logs and rocks in search of "rolly pollies", laying on our backs to identify animals in the cloud formations, or thinking of a good place to dig worms, so we could go fishing!

Our focus has not changed; it's just shifted a bit. So, the next time you have a group of scouts, pre-schoolers, or even middle-school-aged children on the refuge or hatchery or around your home, just go exploring. Marvel at a spider web. Find out what made all the funny marks in the mud. It doesn't take a lot of education or training. It just takes that sense of wonder that we can so easily allow to wither if we don't keep it "watered." So grab your kids (or grandkids) and "water" your sense of wonder! Rachel Carson would be so proud of us!

Getting kids outside isn't just good for the environment. Yes, encouraging kids to connect with nature will build better environmental stewards.. But, there's a lot more to getting kids outside. "Outside" will build healthier, more-active kids who will live longer and healthier lives AND be good stewards for the things they've grown to love and cherish!



OK, inside you can do fish printing; now, go outside and go FISHING!! Photo by Abbey Reibel.

At the recent 2008 Outer Banks Health Expo, volunteers from Alligator River and Pea Island Refuges brought a little of the "outside" to the "inside"-- to encourage everyone to go "outside" for all kinds of reasons!

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

Wage Grade Profile --

Working hard and supporting the mission: Alan Kimbler



Alan Kimbler. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

"I feel honored and lucky to be a part of the team here at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery," says laborer Alan Kimbler. "It is hard work, but it's such a good job. I love being outdoors, and I work with a great crew."

"Because we are short-staffed, we have to work even harder to accomplish our mission," Alan continues. "We still raise as many quality trout as ever, and I feel good about that. It doesn't matter whether it's raining or blazing hot. I always go home at the end of the day feeling good about the opportunity I have, the great fish we raise, and all the terrific fishing opportunities we provide for so many individuals."

A native of Russell County, Kentucky, Alan became a permanent employee at the hatchery in September 2007. Alan, however, is no stranger to the Service. He spent 2006 as a STEP employee at Wolf Creek while completing his degree at Western Kentucky University. Alan graduated in December 2006, and is proud to remain in his native hometown and be a member of the hatchery crew. Alan also is looking forward to marrying his fiancé, Ashley Mann.



Alan Kimbler hard at work. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

"Alan always gives his best effort, willingly accepts responsibility, and has a positive attitude," says James Gray, project leader. He is a great team member, and we are fortunate to have him on our staff."

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

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