



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

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### Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosts first federal inter-agency meeting on environmental education

With a goal of connecting the public, especially children, with nature, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosted on January 17, a first ever meeting between all federal natural resource agencies within the state of Kentucky to discuss the importance of environmental education and public outreach. Along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, representatives from the National Park Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Forest Service were on hand to learn more about the significance of environmental education (EE), including challenges faced and reasons of importance for EE related programs, along with resources and tools that are available to help meet the need. More than 30 people attended the meeting, including field representatives for Congressman Ed Whitfield and Congressman Harold "Hal" Rogers.



Wolf Creek NFH Project Leader James Gray takes meeting participants on a tour. Photo by Kat Lynn.

The meeting featured a myriad of both statewide, nationally and internationally known leaders in the field of environmental education, including Jane Eller, executive director, Kentucky Environmental Education Council and At-Large Board Member, North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE); Maria Zoretic, coordinator, Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools and the new EE in Kentucky website; Dr. Terry Wilson, director of the Center for Mathematics, Science, and Environmental Education at Western Kentucky University, and past president of NAAEE; and Dr. Joe Baust, Director of the Center for Environmental Education at Murray State University, and past president of NAAEE. Drs. Baust and Wilson are both well-known and widely sought after in the field of environmental education. Both are past recipients of the Walter E. Jeske Award, which is the highest international honor in the field of environmental education that one can receive (<http://www.naaee.org/programs-and-initiatives/awards/2007-jeske-award-winner>). Dr. Baust has also secured approximately \$4.1 million in grant funding since 1992.



Group photo of participants. Photo by Kat Lynn.

The hatchery hosted the meeting at its Visitor/Environmental Education Center. The center includes an exhibit hall, theater, classroom, gift shop, and office space. The first of its kind in the Southeast, the center serves school children from the region and visitors from across the nation. The hatchery recently served as the launching site for a new aquatic-themed environmental education curriculum known as the Biologist-in-Training (BiT) Program. Aimed at children in grades 4 through 6, the BiT program is also a first of its kind for the Southeast and for the Fisheries program nationwide. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek NFH, Jamestown, KY

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## ***Behind the Scenes--***

### **Nothing Submitted**

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



A visitor to the Panama City Field Office's festival booth creates her own re-usable shopping bag. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

**“No thanks, I don’t need a bag!”**

The Panama City Ecological Services and Fisheries Resources Office participates in Nature’s Gallery, an art and ecological festival held annually at St. Andrews State Park in the Florida Panhandle. This year we added an educational activity that was a big hit. Booth visitors got a blank sheet of canvas to creatively reflect on how they could change their shopping habits in one small way to have a positive impact on fish and wildlife – and that canvas was a re-usable shopping bag! Festival goers used bright colored fabric markers to make their own statements – “Paper or plastic? Neither!” “No thanks, I don’t need a bag.” “Plastic bag alternative.” “BYOB – Bring your own bag!”

*Submitted by Melody Ray-Culp, Panama City Ecological Services and Fisheries Resources Office, FL*

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### **First Living Shoreline workshop hosted for the Gulf Coast**

As part of our Living Shoreline Initiative (LSLI), the Coastal Program in the Florida Panhandle helped sponsor a workshop for property owners, marine contractors, consultants, coastal managers, and regulators working in a tri-state area along the Gulf of Mexico. Sea Grant Extension staff from Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi hosted about 100 participants at the 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center in Spanish Fort, Alabama, in November 2007. The auditorium was packed with a receptive audience eager to choose soft alternatives instead of seawalls to protect eroding shorelines. Our LSLI goal is to help turn the tide on coastal armoring, and we expect this workshop to be the first of many more to come!



During the Living Shoreline Workshop, participants enjoy a lunch break along Alabama's natural living shoreline. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

*Submitted by Melody Ray-Culp, Panama City Ecological Services and Fisheries Resources Field Office, FL*



Traveling exhibit showcasing Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Georgia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### Okefenokee exhibit hits the road

A three-dimensional traveling exhibit highlighting the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is front and center at the new Georgia Welcome and Visitor Center in Kingsland. Originally created as a temporary display for the Jacksonville International Airport (JIA), the exhibit remained stationed near the baggage claim area for the six-month period. Feedback from the JIA Arts Commission was overwhelmingly positive. Refuge staff began brainstorming how to extend the life of the popular exhibit. Volunteers went to work building a permanent portable case on wheels to house the exhibit. Plans are to alternate the traveling exhibit between the Georgia State Visitor Centers along Interstates 95 and 75.

*Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Fokston, Georgia*

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### Whooping cranes and trout – a natural connection at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

With eyes turned towards the skies, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery served as a viewing site for the annual Operation Migration program for the second year. Founded in 1994 as a non-profit charitable organization by Bill Lishman and Joe Duff, one of the organization's programs is the annual leading of young Whooping cranes on their first migration journey through the use of ultralight airplanes. Operation Migration's success is truly tremendous as approximately 60 birds were taught the migration route from Wisconsin to Florida in the first five years of the program's operation - four times the number that existed in the early 1940's. During their trip, the OM crew landed in Russell County and was stranded for one day, resulting in an opportunity for the Wolf Creek staff to visit and learn more about the program. Some of the crew also stopped in to tour the hatchery and visit the Visitor/Environmental Education Center.



The staff of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery takes time for a group photo in front of the ultralight planes used by the Operation Migration team. Photo by Greg Wells, Times-Journal.

In partnership with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery proved to be a wonderful spot to view the team as they flew over with more than 30 people braving the cold air to have a chance to see the birds fly overhead.



All eyes are turned skyward as the Class of 2007 Whooping cranes leave Russell County, KY, heading for their next stop in Cumberland County, TN. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

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

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## Connecting People with Nature Training Workshop at NCTC a success!

As the snow fell at NCTC December 3-7, 2007, teams of regional ambassadors gathered for the first ever "Connecting People with Nature: Making It Happen in Your Community" Workshop. The workshop prepared participants to serve as ambassadors to guide each region's refocused effort to help children and families develop enduring conservation values and connections with nature. The workshop began with a motivational speech from Director Dale Hall. Other speakers included former Assistant Director Dr. Mamie Parker; photographer and author Dudley Edmonson; educator and change advocate Bill Godfrey; Public Health Analyst Sarah K. Heaton; Dr. Emily Sheffield on changing demographic trends; and Jim and Carson Clark's "My Child in the Woods" presentation which focused on the challenges of involving today's younger generation in nature appreciation.

By March, the team will complete a regional "Connecting People with Nature" plan. The team will then support field stations to help connect people in their communities with nature. For more information visit: <http://www.fws.gov/children/> or <https://intranet.fws.gov/nctc/childrenandnature/>

*Submitted by Kyla Hastie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia*



Region 4 Connecting People With Nature Team: FR: Silamarie Padron, Boqueron, PR; Sharon Fuller, Black Bayou Lake NWR; Garry Tucker, RO- Refuges; Toni Westland, J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR; BR: Judy Toppins, RO- Fisheries; Serena Rinker, A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR; Robin Will, St. Marks NWR; Jeremy Bennett, Big Lake NWR. (Not present: Jennifer Koches, Charleston, SC-ES; Resee Collins, RO - Migratory Birds, Kyla Hastie, RO-EA). Photo by Garry Tucker.

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## Hats Off --



Crane released into the pen. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

### Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge receives publicity for accomplishing several 'firsts'

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge appeared in video and in print with the release of new captive-reared cranes on the refuge. For the new post-Katrina holding pens, it was a year of first releases. More importantly, crane number 9 represents a different first in the realm of Mississippi sandhill crane recovery. Named Cryochick, Number 9 was the first Mississippi sandhill crane successfully hatched using frozen semen. Normally fresh semen is used to inseminate the cranes. In January, Cryochick was released into another pen at the refuge with four friends.

In December, WLOX-TV (south Mississippi) came to the refuge and produced a story about the new visitor's center and about the first winter crane release.

At the building site where the Visitor's Center and new offices are almost complete, Complex Manager, Lloyd Culp talked about the exciting new venture of more than four times the amount of exhibit space, a bookstore and office expansion. Biologists Scott Hereford and Lauren Billodeaux talked about the release at the pen, as video was taken of the cranes adjusting to life with a wing restraint and a radio transmitter on their leg.

After their month-long acclimation period, these birds were debrailed, have now left the pen, and have been sighted in the company of older cranes.



Lauren Billodeaux speaks to WLOX-TV about the crane release. Photo by Emily Neidigh.



Biologists Lauren Billodeaux and Scott Hereford and Intern Lisa Dlugolecki check the birds before removing the wing restraint and releasing them to the wild. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

The birds released at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge are bred in captivity using humans in costume with puppets. Being raised by the puppets keeps the cranes from imprinting on humans while learning how to be cranes.

Also released in January was a captive, parent-reared bird. All of these birds came from the Audubon Center for Research of Endangered Species outside of New Orleans, Louisiana. The January crane release was covered by the Mississippi Sun Herald, and the full color article that they printed will be instrumental in community outreach and understanding of the work being done at the refuge.

*Submitted by Emily Neidigh, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Gautier, MS*

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

**Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosts first federal inter-agency meeting on environmental education -- more photos**



Kyla Hastie, partnerships and public affairs coordinator, External Affairs, speaks to the group on what the Service is doing to connect kids with nature from both a regional and national perspective. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Meeting attendees enjoy a game of "Oh Deer," an activity taken from Project WILD. Photo by Jane Eller.

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## ***Visitor Services --***

**Girl Scout Gold Award project underway at Cape Romain National Wildlife**

## Refuge



Christina May works on framing at endangered red wolf enclosure. Photo by Patricia Lynch.

When Christina May was asked by the Girl Scout Council to support her selection of Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge as her Gold Award project site, she wrote: "I believe that most people don't realize how poorly we as humans are treating our planet. Since there are places schools can take their students to view for themselves how important nature is to us, such as this National Wildlife Refuge, children can be taught the importance of a balanced ecosystem and endangered species can be protected."

Christina met with Ranger Patricia Lynch and developed plans for the project. At Cape Romain's Bulls Island, she will build benches, replace framing on interpretive signs, clear brush on trails, and pick up debris on the beach. At the Sewee Visitor Center, Christina, with scout troop members and Wando High School National Honors Society members, has put a waterproof sealant on the boardwalk and is repairing and painting benches and ironwork. Christina's goals for her project are to contribute to the protection of the refuge's natural resources and to improve the attractiveness of the visitor center's public use areas.

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



Christina May (second from left) and Project Team. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Aubrey McCullough and Liz Gildea paint boards for benches. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Laura McDermott puts her paint skills to work. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Stuart Jackson and David Huddleston paint the framework at wolf enclosure. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Lydia Surretts seals boardwalk over swampland area. Photo by Patricia Lynch.

## Wage Grade Profile --

### In memory of Kenneth Jackson



Kenneth Jackson. FWS Photo.

Kenneth Jackson worked at Edenton National Fish Hatchery for 19 years, first as an animal caretaker and later as maintenance worker. He retired in December 2006, for medical reasons, and passed away January 1, 2008. He was 48 years old.

"He was good-natured and always a gentleman," said Marie Bullock, administrative assistant at the hatchery. "It was my privilege to have known and worked with Kenny. He was a good friend."

"Kenneth had a good sense of humor and was an excellent defensive driver of the hatchery's fish distribution truck, avoiding serious accidents on a number of occasions," added Ronnie Smith, assistant manager of the hatchery.

According to Marie and Ronnie, Kenneth was an avid Dallas Cowboys fan, and loved to play basketball with friends.

Before he joined the staff of the fish hatchery, Kenneth served in the Army for three years as a missile crewman with the First Cavalry Division.

He is survived by his father George and his son Tyrell who had recently flown in from duty with the U.S. Navy in Japan to be with his father for Christmas.

*Submitted by Judy Toppins, Fisheries, Atlanta, GA, and Marie Bullock. Edenton NFH, NC*