



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

JUNE 2008 NEWSLETTER

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Steve Rees, Savannah NWR Law Enforcement on the phone outside the Incident Management Team (left) and Special Operations Response Team (right) Emergency Response Vehicles. May 14, 2008. Photo by USFWS, Tom MacKenzie

The Southeast Region successfully tackles another emergency

The scene was an all too common one in the Southeast. A massive Category 4 hurricane plowed into the Gulf Coast, smack dab on top of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's panhandle.

After being slammed by such devastating hurricanes like Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, the names become a blur of destruction.

Luckily, this one in mid-May was just a drill. It was called Exercise Hurricane Arthur.

"Our goal was to refine our emergency response plan, rehearse our Incident Commanders, and check out all the communications systems in a realistic setting," said Brian Hardison, safety manager for the Southeast Region. "We probably could have just fired up the communications gear from their pre-positioned sites at Okefenokee NWR, but this way, we really see how they really work in the field."

It took less than a half an hour to get the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV), which is a 36-foot trailer, equipped with satellite-based communications, and can sleep six.

The SORT's job is to get into a disaster area quickly, usually within 24 hours of impact. It is composed of experienced Refuge Law Enforcement Officers from around the Southeast Region trained in a wide variety of skills including disaster response and communications. For this deployment, the team included Refuge Law Enforcement Officers Steve Rees of Savannah NWR, Thomas Payne of Piedmont NWR, Jim Shelton of Okefenokee NWR, and Tom MacKenzie of External Affairs.

To add even more realism, not envisioned when this exercise was planned, the route from Piedmont NWR where the SORT Emergency Response Vehicle was pre-positioned, took the convoy through areas of Georgia that were still recovering from the devastating effects of the Mother's Day tornados, which had hit for real early in the morning on May 11, 2008.

Besides the quick response of the SORT and their Emergency Response Vehicle, a second ERV – another 36-foot

communications/equipment trailer was dispatched from Okefenokee NWR. This will form be the initial hub for the Incident Command Team as they conduct the longer term operation of getting damaged facilities back into action. If Hurricane Katrina is any example, this can make a remarkable difference, both to the damaged refuges, and the local communities as well.

The scenario of Exercise Hurricane Arthur reflected damaged infrastructure, namely flooded underpasses, and knocked out utilities from downed trees, destruction from flying debris. Refuges, Fish Hatcheries and Ecological Services Offices in a 300 square mile area might be affected, some seriously.

For exercise purposes, four Incident Commanders from the Southeast Region met at the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta to plan for the monumental tasks of assembling multiple teams to tackle a (simulated) disaster of this magnitude.

They determined the need for initially deploying a 50-person team to manage the response and to conduct recovery operations, such as tree clearing and removal, road clearing and other vital functions to get our Fish and Wildlife resources back into operation. Additional support to nearby communities also might be possible, depending on the agreements made with communities near Fish and Wildlife Service facilities.

“One of our successes during Hurricane Katrina was getting there as quickly as we did,” said Mike Housh, lead incident commander for the exercise, normally the District Fire Management Officer for Okefenokee NWR. “We went in with a small force. FEMA might show up with a supply train 20 miles long. Our small, compact group could be easily supported, so we could get in there fast and see what we need and then build from there.” More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Tom MacKenzie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia



Billy Warren sprays to control invasive phragmites on Bulls Island. Photo by Sarah Dewsey.

Behind the Scenes--

In memory of Volunteer William “Billy” Warren -- July 15, 1943 – March 23, 2008

Billy Warren began volunteering at Cape Romain NWR as a member of the loggerhead sea turtle crew in 2003. Over the last five years, Billy accrued over 1,100 volunteer hours on the Refuge, assisting with the sea turtle nesting project, invasive species control, shorebird surveys, and posting and maintaining seabird nesting areas. Early in 2008, he enthusiastically attended boat operation training classes to enhance his ability to assist with refuge programs. Billy’s dedication and enthusiasm were crucial to continuing the sea turtle nesting surveys on Lighthouse Island as well as initiating a new sea turtle program on Bull’s Island.



Volunteers Billy Warren and Michelle Pate with “Lighthouse,” a loggerhead sea turtle rescued at Cape Romain NWR. Photo by Barbara Bergwer

For almost 10 years, Billy also volunteered at the South Carolina Aquarium, giving over 4,500 hours. His work at the Aquarium

began in 1998 with Billy presenting turtle talks and doing outreach. He then worked at an offsite quarantine facility that housed animals while the Aquarium was being built. When that facility closed, Billy moved to the Aquarium to assist with offshore reef exhibits, care for the bird collection, and helped rehabilitate sick and injured sea turtles in the Sea Turtle Rescue Program.

Billy's presence and involvement with all of Cape Romain's biological programs and his commitment to the South Carolina Aquarium was nothing short of amazing. Billy will remain an inspiration to all of us who knew and worked with him and will be greatly missed.

Submitted by Sarah Dawsey, Biologist, Cape Romain NWR and Kelly Thorvalson, Sea Turtle Rescue Program Coordinator, SC Aquarium

Bragging Rights --



Karleen Vollherbst, Senior Wetland Educator for Environmental Concern, Inc. addresses the workshop attendees at the recent POW! – Planning of Wetlands event. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

Engaging environmental education training at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

Not only is Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery becoming a hub for environmental education field trips, it is also becoming a major focal point for great environmental education trainings and workshops! In April, the hatchery served as host for two events by holding a POW! – Planning of Wetlands class on April 23 and also a Project WILD and Project Learning Tree (PLT) workshop on April 26.

POW! was a partnering endeavor with the non-profit organization Environmental Concern, Inc. (<http://www.wetland.org>), and approximately 12 participants traveled from all over Kentucky to be a part of the class, which focused on how to construct a living, breathing wetland with the help of students.

The Project WILD/PLT event was held in partnership between Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and the Kentucky Division of Forestry. Forest Ranger Belinda Smith served as the instructor for the class. More than 10 teachers and other educators attended the event and learned a myriad of information concerning environmental education activities dealing with wildlife and forestry related topics.

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

Nature festival participants tour Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

Although the highway signs announced the still-closed status of the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, it opened its doors on April 19, to participate in the Earth Day celebrations of the Pascagoula River Nature Festival. Visitors drove past the closed signs and ventured on to the refuge and into the “under construction” visitor center. Many people had never been to the refuge, but several had visited years ago when the exhibit space of the old building took up roughly one-tenth of the new, expanded area.



Visitors enjoy a guided tour. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

Refuge staff and volunteers offered guided tours at both of the two refuge nature trails and kept the visitor center open all day. Families, amateur photographers, and other groups came to the trail walks. It was a great opportunity to show off the colorful blooms of a spring savanna, talk about crane nesting season, get volunteers re-involved with refuge activities and show the Service's commitment to supporting community events

The Pascagoula River Nature Festival is a new name given to a long-running spring festival tied in with migration, wildlife and appreciation of the outdoors on the gulf coast. The refuge has always been involved with the celebration, but with the recent addition of public use staff to the refuge, we were able to expand our activities and get visitors out to the refuge.



Volunteer Mark LaSalle teaches plant identification. Photo by Emily Neidigh.

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

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conducts private landowner prescribed fire workshop

On February 27, 2008, the Sandy Hollow Wildlife Management Area in eastern Louisiana conducted a private landowner prescribed fire workshop. Prescribed burning of pine habitat was promoted to control hardwood encroachment; improve habitat for wildlife; reduce wildfire risks; promote open understories; and provide for aesthetics. After the workshop, participants were taken to a site where a prescribed fire was conducted. More than 90 people attended, including 75 private landowners, most of whom responded positively to the idea of implementing this form of habitat management on their own properties. The Sandy Hollow Wildlife Management Area is a 3,697-acre tract purchased by the State in 1986 as an upland longleaf pine property. It is primarily managed for longleaf pine restoration and wildlife, particularly game birds. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Wildlife Division and its Wildlife Management Areas are partially supported by federal funding from the Wildlife Restoration Program, administered by the Service's Southeast Regional Division of Federal Assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.wlf.state.la.us/hunting/wmas/wmas/list.cfm?wmaid=44>



LDWF Biologist Jimmy Stafford lighting a prescribed fire at Sandy Hollow WMA, as private landowner workshop participants watch. Photo by Chris Davis, LDWF.

Submitted by Diana Swan, Federal Assistance, Atlanta, Georgia



Students plant the sea oats about 18 inches apart and about 6 inches deep. Photo by Mark Langner, SWCG coordinator.

Elementary school students plant sea oats at Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge

The Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group acts as a support group for the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, including Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, Grand Bay NWR and Bon Secour NWR. The Group coordinated with the Spanish Fort Elementary Project's Jubilee Classes and got involved in hands-on conservation activities. On March 11 and 12, 2008, students in the third-grade through the fifth grade traveled to Bon Secour NWR to learn vital conservation education and to actively assist in sand dune restoration. Refuge staff and volunteers educated the students on the sand dune ecosystem, endangered sea turtles, and the endangered Alabama beach mouse. Students learned about sea turtle nest identification and nest recording procedures. Then, they located eggs and protected a mock sea turtle nest. The students also participated in sand dune restoration by planting over 750 sea oats and other native dune plants which were provided by the Friends of Bon Secour.

Submitted by the Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group, Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Gautier, MS

Healthy, successful, pup season for red wolves in northeastern North Carolina

April and May are exciting months for red wolves - both in the wild and in captivity. It's pup season! This annual occurrence finds the Red Wolf Recovery Program's wildlife biologists spending many hours in the field, seven days a week, looking for hidden dens over the five North Carolina counties of Dare, Tyrrell, Hyde, Washington, and Beaufort. Radio telemetry collars tell the biologists there are 18-20 packs in this 1.7 million acres of northeastern North Carolina - the only place in the world where red wolves roam free in a portion of their original home range. To date, in this 2008 pup season, the biologists have found 12 litters with 51 red wolf puppies. There could be more! For the next several weeks, the five red wolf wildlife biologists will keep looking. Ideally, the red wolf field crew would like to find three or four more dens. However, this has already been a "healthy" denning season. During 2007, 2006, and 2005, 31, 44, and 55 pups respectively were found among the wild population.



Wild red wolf pups from a 2008 litter in eastern North Carolina. FWS photo.

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



Visitors take the Fakahatchee Strand Swamp Walk. Photo by Andee Naccarato.

Florida Panther Week activities attract crowds

More than 2,200 people enjoyed participating in Florida Panther Week events, March 8-15, 2008. The Week's activities were sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners including the Friends of Florida Panther Refuge, Naples Zoo, Big Cypress National Preserve, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, and Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW). Some of the participating organizations included J. N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Defenders of Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the Fire Management team for the Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuges, Picayune Strand State Forest, and "Cat Fight!," an educational game under development. Highlights

from Florida panther week included a day at the Naples, Florida Zoo on March 8; a Fakahatchee Strand Swamp Walk on March 13; a 14-mile bike ride at the Big Cypress Preserve on March 14; and Florida Panther Day at Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge on March 15, featuring swamp buggy rides, orchid walks, and native plant and bird identification opportunities.



Folks enjoy lunch during Florida Panther Day. Photo by Takako Sato.

Submitted by Takako Sato, Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands Refuges, Naples, Florida



The artists with their students. FWS Photo.

Honoring mother earth in Vieques, Puerto Rico

On April 25, 2008, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA) and the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust (VCHT) honored Mother Earth at the Junior High School named La 20 de septiembre de 1988. More than 350 students and teachers participated of conferences, audiovisual presentations, and educational and recreational activities related to the conservation of our environment.

These young people were introduced to some of the agencies and organizations responsible for the conservation and protection of our natural resources. Among the participating organizations were DNER, VCHT, FWS/Ticatove, Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Vieques Recycling Program, UPR Sea Grant Program from Humacao, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), US Coast Guard (USCG) and our artists Ardelle Ferrer and La 20 art teacher Esteban Carle. These students were amazed and delighted by all the activities honoring our Mother Earth. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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

Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center hosts heavy equipment safety training

The Warm Springs Regional Fish Center hosted a two-day heavy equipment safety training session in April. Instructors Ray Woods of Overflow National Wildlife Refuge, Mike Yelverton of Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge, and Instructor-in-Training Jason Coates of Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge instructed five fisheries employees and one volunteer from the Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge in the safe use of a forklift and an agricultural tractor. The six students learned the proper uses of both pieces of equipment through a combination of classroom time and hands-on experience. Each student had to demonstrate their ability to drive a tractor and a forklift and properly attach other equipment and/or lift different types of loads. At all times, safety was the main focus of the course. The instructors also toured the Center and gained a new perspective of the fisheries program.



Students of the class. FWS Photo.

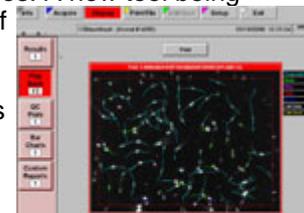
Submitted by William Bouthillier, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Fisheries biologists from the Service and the State of Alabama getting a look at CASA program from SOA intern Sharon Clemmensen. FWS Photo.

New technologies help in the recovery of aquatic species

The Warm Springs Fish Technology Center is developing new techniques to assist in aquatic species recovery. The ability to determine the quality of sperm is an important aspect of fish spawning, and it is critical in the use of cryopreserved sperm samples. The optimal procedure for sperm quality assessment is fertilization trials. However, these are time consuming, costly, and often difficult with threatened or endangered species. Therefore, motility estimates are often used to determine sperm quality because they are fast and inexpensive. These motility analyses are often determined by visual estimation, are subjective, and have not correlated well with fertilization rates in some instances. A new tool being applied is computer-assisted sperm analysis (CASA). CASA offers methods of calculating sperm quality that are quantitative and repeatable. CASA also provides analysis of other sperm and motility characteristics, such as sperm velocity, that are not available using normal motility estimates. It is hoped that these other characteristics will correlate well with fertilization results, and provide a procedure to predict the fertilization success of sperm samples without having to do fertilization trials. To date several fish species have benefited from use of these new technologies: lake sturgeon, shortnose sturgeon, pallid sturgeon, striped bass and alligator gar and in the near future freshwater mussels, crayfish and salamanders also may benefit.



Screen display of the CASA program: highlighted colors are shortnose sturgeon sperm velocity tracts. FWS Photo.

Submitted by William Bouthillier, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Caddo Memorial Plaza. FWS Photo.

Caddo Nation honored at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

During the construction of the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery in the early 1930s, more than 100 Caddo Indian graves were desecrated, destroyed, or looted. A few remains were taken to the Smithsonian Institution. Eight years of cooperative work between the staffs of the hatchery, the Smithsonian, and the Caddo's NAGPRA Office finally culminated in the remains from the Smithsonian being reinterred on hatchery grounds on March 6, 2008. To make the public aware of the cultural significance of the hatchery grounds to the Caddo people, a Memorial Plaza was constructed and, on March 7, more than 160 people attended the dedication. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Karen Kilpatrick, Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, Natchitoches, Louisiana

Saving the Savannah River shad

As predictable as the sunrise each morning, spring brings a return of the American shad to the Savannah River System. After spending nearly four years in the open ocean and traveling thousands of miles, American shad will return to the very river systems from where they were spawned. This year's spawning shad, however, made the return trip to the Savannah River System only to meet a virtual dead end at New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam.



New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, Savannah River. Photo by Jennifer Koches.

At River Mile 187, New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam near Augusta, Georgia is the first in a series of dams on the Savannah River. Operated by the City of Augusta, the dam's lock gates are opened several times during the spring to allow for passage of fish to spawning grounds in the shoal habitat above the dam. Unfortunately, this year's run of shad was not going to be afforded the opportunity to access those spawning grounds. The lock gates New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam were rendered non-functional earlier this spring, placing the Savannah River shad at an impasse. Access to historic spawning grounds was not to happen this year.

That was until two separate shad "trap and transport" efforts were organized by biologists from Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery, Charleston and Asheville Field Offices, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Service, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and The Nature Conservancy. Positioned at the base of the dam, electroshock boats filled with biologists shocked and trapped nearly 900 American shad. Fish were collected and moved to waiting transport trucks and then carefully released above the dam so the journey to spawning grounds could continue. Nearby anglers watched in amazement as the boat loads of shad were "assisted" with their migration. Reporters, carefully positioned in nearby media boats, also witnessed firsthand this well-orchestrated "assisted" migration.

Deeply rooted in the history and culture of both South Carolina and Georgia, shad fishing on the Savannah River is a fishery that has been in a steady decline since the late 1800's. Shad landings on the Savannah have fallen from near 500,000 thousand pounds in the late 1800's to currently around 30,000 pounds. Faced with the possibility of a failed shad run this spring, the Service,

in cooperation with its partners, decided that the assisted migration was a necessary step. Going the extra mile to help secure the future of the Savannah River shad fishery...an "assisted migration" that was well worth the effort! More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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



Ruth McDonald. Photo by Elizabeth Day.

South Arkansas Refuge Complex employee gives birth to butterflies

Ruth McDonald, forester for the South Arkansas Refuge Complex, recently gave birth to eight butterflies. Astounding as this may seem it is a part of the Junior Naturalist Program Ruth has started on the Felsenthal Refuge.

The butterflies are commonly called Painted Ladies and are being used to teach children about the natural life of butterflies and how they develop. The caterpillars were purchased as a part of a kit that goes through step by step the process of raising the critters through the various stages of their life cycle. The eventual and final stage of this process will be releasing the butterflies out into the refuge.

Approximately 20 junior naturalists have taken part in this multipart program being offered by McDonald. The program included sections on animal tracks, insects, trees, orienteering, fishing, bird house building and bird feeder building. The release of the newly hatched butterflies will be one of the final sessions for these children.



Some of the butterflies. Photo by Bernie Petersen.

Submitted by Bernie Petersen, South Arkansas Refuge Complex, Crossett, Arkansas



Volunteer Coordinator Abbey Reibel and Intern Willy Thompson taught students at First Flight Middle School how to identify animals by their tracks. Photo by First Flight Middle School.

Service teaches First Flight Middle School students about the outdoors, wildlife

The Junior Refuge Friends group at First Flight Middle School in Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, has had quite an exciting year! Back in September, they visited Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge to try their hands at paddling canoes, and they explored the blackwater swamps of the refuge. At their monthly meetings during the school year, they've learned about refuges across the country, bears, red wolves, adaptations, sea turtles, fire, and lots of other things from a variety of refuge staff, volunteers, and Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society members. At their most recent meeting, Abbey Reibel had them out in the school yard, identifying tracks and making casts of them.



Although the students didn't actually see the deer, red wolves, otters, bobcats, and other wildlife in the school yard, they were able to identify them by the tracks they found! Photo by First Flight Middle School.

Their grand finale for the year was a trip to Pea Island NWR on May 25, to establish three bird feeder stations, including a watering station with bird bath and drip system. While they're on the refuge, they'll learn what poisonous plants occur and identify and mark them on the wildlife trail. Afterwards, refuge staff will either cut the plants or treat them with herbicide for public safety.

The Junior Refuge Friends group at First Flight Middle School is completing it's second year. For the 2008-2009 school year, the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society is partnering with the refuge to expand this program to include all middle schools in Dare and Tyrrell Counties.

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



Students plant a Cypress tree.
Photo by Jim Brooks.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR helps area school plant trees

The students, teachers, and parents at College Park elementary school in Gautier, Mississippi, have been planting trees for a couple of years now and are about to install a new playground in the school's yard with big trees as educational specimens. Refuge staff coordinated the deal with a local city councilman; the refuge's friends group, the Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group, and the schools Parent Teacher Organization. Five 20-foot tall trees were planted, a Cypress, a Red maple, a Southern magnolia, a River birch, and a Nuttall oak. The holes were dug by a small track hoe and then filled in and watered by the students. Local newspapers and television outlets were on site for the May event.

Submitted by Douglas Hunt, Gulf Coast Refuge Complex, Gautier, Mississippi

Biologists work to keep rare fish off Endangered Species List

Biologists collected 27,000 thousand sicklefin redhorse eggs this spring as part of an ongoing captive rearing and release program that will expand the range of the species and help eliminate the need for listing the fish under the Endangered Species Act. The eggs were fertilized and will be reared in Conservation Fisheries, Inc.'s Knoxville, Tennessee, facility before being released back in western North Carolina, above dams on the Tuckasegee and Oconaluftee Rivers, where biologists hope to establish new populations. This is a cooperative conservation effort between the Service, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and Conservation Fisheries, Inc. First discovered in the 1990s, the sicklefin redhorse is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.



Biologists harvest eggs from a sicklefin redhorse. Photo by Mark Cantrell.

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



Students and teachers look at an endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. Photo by Gary Peeples.

North Carolina high school students search for endangered mussel

On May 17, a flotilla of 17 boats set out on North Carolina's Toe River on an expedition to find the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. While biologists routinely monitor the presence of the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel, what set this effort apart was that it was made up largely of students from Mountain Heritage High School's Eco-Club. Organized as a celebration of Endangered Species Day, the trip included students, biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and members of Toe River Valley Watch. The team found two elktoes, a wavy-rayed lampmussel, and a hellbender salamander.

"We wanted to give the students an opportunity to see first hand the biodiversity found in the river, especially the endangered species found in their own backyard," said John Fridell, the Service's Appalachian elktoe expert. "It is one thing to talk about a river, it is another to feel the cold water around your legs, watch the fish around your feet, and see the big sky above. I hope at the end of the day, everyone on the trip had a deeper appreciation for the Toe River."

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

Friends Group --

Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge dedicates Dr. Ray Watson Memorial Trail



Louise Watson and Refuge Manager Henry Sansing with the new trail sign. Photo by Andrea Dunstan.

On Arbor Day, April 25, Noxubee Refuge, along with more than 60 friends and colleagues celebrated the dedication and ribbon-cutting of a new walking trail dedicated to the memory of Dr. James Ray Watson, former botany professor at Mississippi State University and charter member of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge. Dr. Watson, dendrology instructor for many years, frequently utilized refuge forests for outdoor lab sessions with his students and for his personal enjoyment. He enjoyed the writings of Edward Abbey, especially the quote, "The idea of wilderness needs no defense. It only needs more defenders."

This three-quarter-mile trail starts and ends directly across the road from the visitor center. Examples of over 30 species of trees, shrubs, and woody vines are identified along the trail and marked by numbered signs which correspond with a trail guide and programmed MP3 players.

This trail will be a credit to both Noxubee Refuge and the memory of a great friend, Dr. Ray Watson.

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

Hats Off --



Larry Anderson receives Jimmy Clark Award

On March 14, 2008, Larry Anderson, refuge officer at St Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida received the 2008 Jimmy Clark Award for outstanding refuge law enforcement accomplishments. He was presented the award during annual in-service training at the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers Training Academy near Jackson.

Larry Anderson receives the 2008 Jimmy Clark Award. With Larry are Marie Clark, widow of Officer Jimmy Clark, and their son, Allen Clark. USFWS photo.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award," said Larry.

Larry averages from 120 to 140 cases a year with a near perfect conviction rate. He has served at the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge since transferring from the National Park Service in January 1997.

Most recently, Larry employed his investigative and surveillance skills in apprehending a violent felon illegally taking wildlife with a high powered rifle. Larry endured numerous death threats from both the subject and his family. Larry's persistence and excellent case presentation skills resulted in a conviction of the career felon who received a 22-year prison sentence.

The Jimmy Clark Award is given annually to any refuge law enforcement Officer in the Southeast whose performance, conduct, and commitment have contributed to the enhancement of resource law enforcement, the law enforcement profession, and the image of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The award was established in honor of James A. Clark, a former Service firefighter and refuge law enforcement officer who died of Leukemia.

Submitted by Bruce Butler, Jr. Office of Law Enforcement, Groveland, Florida

Take Pride in America® presents local Pea Island volunteers with national service awards

On April 30, fourth grade students from Nags Head Elementary School in North Carolina joined with Take Pride in America®, as they took part in the Southside Discovery program at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, with a volunteer awards ceremony following. The Southside Discovery program focuses on teaching the students about the salt marshes, ocean organisms, and their adaptations. Afterwards, Take Pride in America presented around 30 local volunteers with Presidential Volunteer Service Awards for their continued commitment to Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

The President's Volunteer Service Award, created by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, is the highest award for volunteerism to be bestowed on Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service.



Representatives from the National Take Pride in America team visited Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge to observe some of the refuge's volunteers in action and to present awards to around 30 volunteers. Photo by Lisa Young, Take Pride in America

“These students and volunteers embody the spirit of the Take Pride in America program,” said Katie Loovis, Executive Director, Take Pride in America. “They serve as an inspiration to us all, as they freely give their time and talents to help maintain and enhance our shared spaces.”

Take Pride in America is a national partnership program aimed at increasing volunteer service on America’s public lands. It is the goal of Take Pride in America to empower volunteers from every corner of America to maintain and enhance our natural, cultural, and historical sites. Take Pride in America encourages citizen stewardship through an innovative public awareness campaign and an interactive website that showcases volunteer opportunities at natural and cultural sites. For more information, visit www.TakePride.gov.

Submitted by Thomas Hase, Take Pride in America, Washington, D. C.

Photo Album --

The Southeast Region successfully tackles another emergency -- more photos



Jim Shelton, Okefenokee NWR and Steve Rees, Savannah NWR start setting up the Southeast Region Special Operations Response Team Emergency Response Trailer during Exercise Hurricane Arthur, May 13, 2008. Photo by USFWS Tom MacKenzie



Thomas Payner check out communications while setting up the Special Operations Emergency Response Vehicle during Exercise Hurricane Arthur May 13, 2008 by USFWS Tom MacKenzie



Refuge LE Thomas Payne, Piedmont NWR levels the Special Operations Responst Team Emergency Response Trailer during Exercise Hurricane Arthur May 13, 2008 by USFWS Tom MacKenzie



Steve Rees, Savannah NWR Law Enforcement sets up a laptop computer for the high-tech Emergency Response Trailer that the Southeastern Region Special Response Team uses to rapidly deploy to hot spots to provide information to help Fish and Wildlife leadership reponde to a disaster. Photo by Tom MacKenzie, USFWS May 13, 2008

Honoring mother earth in Vieques, Puerto Rico -- more photos



Sea turtle workshop conducted by USCG. FWS Photo.



DNR conducts workshop with students. FWS Photo.



Sea Grant sand workshop. FWS Photo.



FWS conducts workshop with students. FWS Photo.

Caddo Nation honored at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery -- more photos



Caddo Plaque. FWS Photo.



Dorothy Lippert from the Smithsonian Institution speaking at the Dedication and sharing her thoughts about the eighty-year process to return the Caddo remains held at the Smithsonian since the 1930's. FWS Photo.



Karen Kilpatrick, hatchery manager, and LaRue Parker, chairwoman of the Caddo Nation, unveil the monument. FWS Photo.



Caddo Nation Princess Elizabeth Rey-Guy dressed in full regalia for the Dedication ceremony. Photo by Jan Dean.

Saving the Savannah River shad -- more photos -- All photos by Jennifer Koches



L-R) Mark Cantrell, USFWS - Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, Maurice Mickens, USFWS - Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery, and Tripp Boltin, USFWS - Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery/Fisheries Coordination Office, transporting American shad from Corps electroshock boat to waiting transport truck from Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery.



(L-R) Ken Boyd, US Army Corps of Engineers, Tripp Boltin, USFWS - Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery/Fisheries Coordination Office, and Jamie Sykes, US Army Corps of Engineers in Corps electroshock boat, shocking for shad at base of dam.



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources personnel delivering shad to waiting transport truck from Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery - manned by Mark Cantrell USFWS - Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, and Sheldon Hawkins, USFWS - Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery.



American shad.



(L-R) Dean Palmer, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Mark Cantrell, USFWS - Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, and Amanda Hill, USFWS - Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, observe fresh caught shad before their release above the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam.



Volunteer Tommy Graham discusses stair construction. Photo by Tricia Lynch.

Visitor Services --

Refuge visitors tour Cape Romain's historic Lighthouse Island

On April 27, blue skies, sunshine, and a slight breeze made for a perfect spring day to boat out to Cape Romain's Lighthouse Island. Refuge volunteer and lighthouse guide Tommy Graham met the tour group at the Sewee Center and shared island history and old photographs of the lights and their keepers. Following Graham's presentation, the 53 visitors headed to McClellanville where they boarded the refuge concessionaire's boats to Lighthouse Island. The island, located seven miles from the mainland, is in a national Wilderness Area with no dock or facilities. An adventurous group, visitors waded ashore and walked the narrow dirt path to the lights. Graham accompanied visitors to the two lighthouses where everyone had the opportunity to enter both lights and see the old brick and iron construction. Graham also pointed out foundation areas where the keeper's houses once stood.

Built in 1827, the conical lighthouse stands at 65 feet. Its light, powered by a whale oil wick lamp, was visible from a distance of 14 miles under the most favorable circumstances. In 1857, a 150-foot octagonal lighthouse was built. Installed on the 150-foot tower was a prismatic lens that was visible for approximately 19 miles and dramatically reduced the number of shipwrecks off the Cape. The 1857 light was taken out of service in 1947 when coastal navigation techniques made it obsolete. Both lights are a significant maritime landmark and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1827 lighthouse is the oldest of its kind still standing in the United States.

Annually, Cape Romain offers a spring and fall tour to Lighthouse Island. For more information about the tours, please contact the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center at 843.928.3368.



Participants head up the path to the lights. Photo by Tricia Lynch.



Visitors enter the 1827 lighthouse. Photo by Tricia Lynch.



Visitors enjoy lunch on Lighthouse Island. Photo by Tricia Lynch.

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

Wage Grade Profile --

Tom Jackson: One of the very capable WG employees at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge



Tom Jackson. USFWS photo.

Maintenance workers are like glue, they hold a refuge together. Without anyone to mow, plow, plant, paint, patch, clean, and without anyone to maintain water lines, buildings and equipment and assorted other tasks, the refuge would be in disarray. There are more than 165 miles of roadsides and hundreds of small forest openings on Noxubee Refuge. Mowing alone can be an all consuming task even though openings are cut only often enough to keep down woody vegetation. Open spaces are necessity for a diversity of wildlife.

Tom Jackson has been a time maintenance worker at the refuge since 1979. Before coming to Noxubee, Tom worked at a cabinet plant and on the county road crew. Both jobs taught him some of the skills needed for the array of jobs his present position requires. In the 27 years since, however, he's learned to operate a wide variety of vehicles, such as bulldozers and backhoes, and he knows how to perform many skilled jobs, such as welding.

Tom sees his job as a good way to stay "in the great outdoors." He enjoys hunting and fishing and most sports. He confesses to even watching golf!

A devout Christian, Tom and his family are active members of Lonely Valley CME Church. He is the Sunday School Superintendent, sings in the choir, and is a Steward. His wife, Janet, is the pianist. Married 23 years, Tom and Janet have three children: Sophia, Sabrina and Neil. When talking to him, Tom's love for his family and wife is obvious. For example, he still sends flowers to Janet and not just on special occasions.

Tom's nickname is Buck. While still in high school, Tom played on a sandlot basketball team. It seems that when he shot a particular way, he tended to kick up a leg. A fellow player said he looked like a buck deer, kicking up his heels. So, he became Buck. He doesn't play sandlot basketball anymore, but Buck is a valuable part of Noxubee's maintenance team.

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

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