



"The Eagle's Eye"

Newsletter of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Edited by Lori N, Robin W & Christine B

Fishing - a Family Tradition at St. Marks NWR by Robin Will

Fishing is an important American tradition, right up there with baseball and apple pie. Most of us remember the first fish we caught and where we caught it - especially if we grew up in Florida. Florida is known as the "Fishing Capital of the World" for good reason, as this state offers excellent saltwater and freshwater fishing opportunities to residents and visitors alike. Fishing does not need to be expensive or involve long trips as ponds, lakes, and rivers near Tallahassee offer bluegill, largemouth bass and catfish. Surf fishing along the Gulf may produce trout, redfish, mullet and flounder. Also, with food costs on the rise, catching your own fish is a valuable option. Remember, the magic trio of salt, pepper, and cornmeal along with a 12-inch iron skillet heated just right produces fine fare!

Sadly, the Outdoor Recreation Participation Report of 2008 by the Outdoor Foundation indicates that from 2006 to 2007, there was an 11.6% drop in participation in outdoor recreation activities, including fishing, among American children ages 6 to 17. It seems that more children increasingly spend their free time indoors or in structured sedentary activities. This trend contributes to increased rates in childhood obesity, increases in depression and attention deficit disorder. Young people who are isolated from the outdoors are far less likely to be active participants and champions of the environment as adults. So, how do we reverse this trend? The report surveyed the children and found that the primary motivations for engaging in outdoor activities are parents, friends, family, and relatives. It is clear that children need our support to learn about the benefits and joy of a healthy active outdoor lifestyle.

Fishing is an opportunity to introduce children to a lifetime sport that will offer hours of recreation, relaxation and time with family and friends.

Fishing introduces children to the diversity of nature and our dependence on a healthy environment. It sparks an interest in an activity that crosses all generations and backgrounds that will last a lifetime, promotes a healthy lifestyle and creates stewards to protect America's natural heritage. So, let's go fishing!



Sarah and Sami Halbert learn how to cast the rod and reels as volunteer Alan Whitehead offers instruction.

SUMMER 2009

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

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<http://www.fws.gov/saintmarks>

Happy summer! I guess I should start with a Whooping Crane update. We lost # 826 on the migration route. While that saddens all of us, the good news is that the other six cranes made it safely back to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. The latest update had five of the six still staying together. Number 13 is still a wandering young lady. Oh well, there is always one in the bunch. We will eagerly await their return in November or December. We also look forward to a flight of new chicks this fall.

Also in the good news category, we received some funds through the government stimulus program, now being referred to as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). We received funds to replace the Saltwater Boat Ramp, and to repair the saltwater accessible dock. Last but not least, we will be constructing a new building to replace the Environmental

Education Cabin. We are hoping that construction will begin within the year.

You may be wondering about the cabin. We plan on selling it. The cabin will have to be removed from the site. We will be conducting a sealed bid sale as soon as the plans are approved for the new building. The cabin and the porches will have to be completely removed from the site. If you are interested in the building, contact me at the refuge office.

The East River Boat Ramp was removed in anticipation of the stimulus funds; however, that money was transferred to the education area and the plans for the boat ramp went into the deferred maintenance budget for 2010.

Come and visit your National Wildlife Refuge and watch the wonderful changes.

St. Vincent NWR Planning

Monica Harris

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires that a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) be prepared for each refuge in the National Refuge System. Both the Service and the public will benefit from this requirement, as the CCP process provides many opportunities for ensuring that the long-term vision and goals for refuges will be evaluated, developed, and achieved.

What does this mean for the Refuge?

- Provides a clear vision of the future desired conditions for the refuge over the next 15 years.

- Ensures that management decisions will fulfill the mission of the Refuge system, as well as the specific purposes for which the Refuge was established..
- Provides direction for wildlife management practices, fishing and hunting programs, endangered species recovery, land acquisition, habitat restoration, facilities development and maintenance, staffing and administrative priorities.
- Identifies which public uses are appropriate and compatible with the purposes of the Refuge and the vision and goals that are established. Continued on pg. 11.

Visitor Information

Visitor Center- The Refuge visitor center and office is located on County Rd 59, 3 miles south of U. S. Hwy 98 at Newport. Visit the displays describing refuge wildlife and habitats and the refuge association bookstore.

Entrance Fees- Federal entrance fee passes apply (America the Beautiful, Senior, Access) or daily passes can be purchased for \$5 per car. Annual passes include the St. Marks NWR Specific Pass and the current Federal Duck Stamp.

Hours- The Refuge is open daylight hours all year and the Visitor Center is open from 8 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday; and 10 am till 5 pm weekends. Closed on Federal holidays.

Lighthouse Drive- For casual observation, the Lighthouse Road provides many excellent stopping points along the 7-mile stretch of road from the Visitor Center to the St Marks Lighthouse on Apalachee Bay. Please observe the posted speed limit.

Restrooms - Located at the Refuge Visitor Center, Tower Pond/Mounds Trail and Otter Lake Recreation Area.

Picnic Facilities- Located next to Tower Pond Trail and Otter Lake.

Hiking- The fall, winter and early spring are the best times. Foot- and bicycle-traffic are allowed on trails. Guides are available at the toll booth, visitor center and information kiosks.

Fishing- Freshwater and saltwater fishing are available in certain areas of the refuge year round. Contact Visitor Center for restrictions. Boat launching is permitted during daylight hours at the Lighthouse saltwater launching ramp.

Hunting - Hunting is permitted for resident game species in designated areas fall - spring. Contact the Refuge after June 1 for current year's applications and permit information, **or visit www.fws.gov/saintmarks**

The Red Wolves are hiding today. There is a special event on barrier island St. Vincent NWR, home to the Red Wolf Recovery Project. Although the 1200-acre island is a two hour drive west, it is part of North Florida Wildlife Refuge Complex. After a checkered history during its years of private ownership, established hunting camp, it has now regained much of its primitive habitat.

St. Vincent is accessible by boat only, and annually, volunteers host visitors and offer informative programs with tram rides through the flatwoods and hikes on the beach. Two or three hundred people come to learn, and have access to a small portion of the island. I walk with a small group along the beach, where we learn about Native American occupants, who walked the island long before us. I reflect on whose steps came before mine, how they lived, what traces we will leave behind for others to discover some long, long stretch of time beyond the now. For a moment, I am sad: I regret that our legacy will not be as simple and pure as a few shards of pottery.

Down the beach, many tangled, weathered tree roots claw their way along the shoreline, exposed, no longer the support for the stalwart trunks above them. We discuss erosion—in a way, maybe it's really not erosion. It's just change: large sections of the shoreline are slipping away, giving birth to a new island formation nearby. Later, as I sit alone on the beach as close to the incoming tide as I dare, a Laughing Gull totters purposefully my way to see if I have grapes to share, or maybe a crust of bread. I am still. It comes even closer. I enjoy this sweet moment,



Dunes at St Vincent.
Taken by Christine Barnes

when this wild creature appears comfortable with my presence.

I think back to the past year, when the 19th century lighthouse at St. Marks required some excavation at its base. The surrounding sand yielded some treasures that were 8000 years old. I watch the gull, sift the sands through my fingers, roll a shell or two in my hand, and think of the eons of tide and wind and moon and sun, hurricane and cold and salt and water, in myriad forms and with varying force, which have acted together to make the beach where the gull and I continue to commune.

Just below the dunes and away from the water's reach, I work with other volunteers to rope off and post 'sensitive nesting area' signs. At this time of year, it's not just the wolves that need our support: some of the endangered shorebirds, inadvertently on a collision course with humans, scrape away a layer of sand and camouflage their eggs so expertly that they blend perfectly with the grains on which they lie, exposed and vulnerable to footsteps of casual beachcombers. The visi-

tors who come to St. Vincent today learn about conservation, preservation and protection of essential habitat, and each person is one more believer, one more evangelist, informed and prepared to carry forth the word.

This moment feels right: the sound of the gentle waves tickling the shoreline on this windy day, the sun, the birds, the springtails, the sand and shells—the pottery wearing away with time and water— islands forming and reforming— wolf pups on their way to a new

wild home—the Earth in its springtime flood of courtship and rebirth. All things alive have walked hand-in-hand on this ancient planet thorough time. We are here for a minute or less, by comparison. The continued survival of this great design depends on every person understanding the consequences of each footprint we leave. We must learn to walk a lot more gently. Although we will surely leave more than shards, let our legacy reflect increasing discipline in our choices and our actions.



Interior freshwater lake at St. Vincent.
Taken by Christine Barnes

Hunting

Worksheets for the St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge 2009-10 hunt season will be available online at http://myfwc.com/license/Hunt_Quota_LimitedEntryWorksheets.htm Applications may be submitted at any license agent or tax collectors office or on-line at www.wildlifelicense.com/fl beginning **10:00a.m. (Eastern Time) June 15, 2009** through **11:59 (Eastern Time) July 30, 2009**. We are transitioning to Florida FWCC total licensing system for quota hunt permitting and expanded amenity fee sales. These functions have previously been handled by refuge staff. This change is an effort to streamline our operation and offer a centralized, accessible format, for St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge hunting opportunities.

Quota hunt applications are now available for the 2009-10 hunting season. St. Vincent Island and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuges offer a variety of hunting opportunities for the public. Species such as the elusive, exotic, 700 pound Sambar Stag, and the wary, keen, Eastern Wild Turkey may be harvested with quota permit. Both refuges offer White-tailed deer hunts too. Please call the St. Marks visitor center or check out our website for application information. (850) 925-6121 www.fws.gov/saintmarks

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Quota Hunts	Date	Unit	# Permits
Fall Archery	Oct. 27-31, 2009	Panacea	200
Fall Archery	Nov. 3-7, 2009	Wakulla	200
General Gun	Dec. 18-20, 2009	Panacea	80
General Gun	Dec. 12-14, 2009	Wakulla	175
Mobility-impaired Gun Hunt	Dec. 12-14, 2009	Panacea/Buckhorn Creek	15
Spring Gobbler	April 13-17, 2010	Wakulla and Panacea	100
St. Vincent NWR Sambar Quota Hunt	Dec, 3-5, 2009		200
Non-Quota Hunts			
St. Marks Small Game	Dec. 26, 2009- Jan. 3, 2010	Wakulla and Panacea	Pick up at St. Marks Visitor Center after Sept. 1, 2009
St. Vincent Archery White-tailed Deer and Hog Hunt	Nov. 12-14, 2009		
St. Vincent Primitive Weapons White-tailed Deer and Hog Hunt	Jan. 21-23, 2010		

Fishing

Water temperatures and salinities on the Gulf Coast were above average this spring, promoting an early return of flats species (Redfish, Spanish, Spotted Seatrout, and my favorite, Southern Flounder). The Flounder have a slightly different way of making their living compared to other predatory sport fish. The Flounder doesn't maneuver the water column looking for prey, but rather lays still in shallow water ready to ambush from a strategic location. Sometimes this location is sandy beach with sand kicked up on its' back, or an oyster shell reef that is partially exposed above the water creating a perfect edge. When small pinfish and other baitfish meander in the shallows, they should rethink their strategy, where is the next Flounder?

Lighthouse Update

Andy Edel



April 2, 2009 The second annual Lantern Tour of the Lighthouse was led by lighthouse keeper Gordon as a scheduled event for the Wakulla Wildlife festival.

April 25, 2009 Florida Lighthouse Day. Almost 1,000 visitors enjoyed touring during Florida Lighthouse Day.



March 28, 2009 Our new "Lighthouse Keeper" Gordon led a "Lighthouse Adventure" tour as part of refuge's Families In Nature programs.



April 25, 2009 Florida Lighthouse Day. Our fourth annual Open House was a huge success.



April 23, 2009 The United States Lighthouse Society toured the lighthouse as part of their Gulf Lighthouse tour. They commented that "our stop at St Marks was so enjoyable."

Volunteer Update

David Moody

Late spring offers a whole new outlook on the volunteer program, sort of a transitional time. With the "cooler" season ending, most RV Volunteers have headed back home to get their second spring. (Did you know that dogwoods are still white and beautiful in West Virginia?) Requests for offsite summer Environmental Education programs have elevated due to the fact bus transportation is so expensive. Local and RV Volunteer support is the only way we can accommodate the elevated numbers of students. St. Marks Refuge partners with local and state government agencies to provide educational and interactive programs in the community. Our premiere event is the Kids Fishing Clinic (held May, 9th this year). Over 300 kids and parents attended this event at Wooley Park in Panacea FL. Staff and volunteers also serve as weigh-in officials for the Kids Fishing Tournament held April 25th of this year.

We need volunteer support for visitor center operations late spring and summer. We don't have as many tourists during this time period, but do have lots of anglers and photographers canvassing the refuge. Bookstore sales will increase on the weekends as well as numbers of visitors. If you can offer volunteer support, even half of a day, that would be a great help. Please contact David Moody @ (850) 925-6121.

Calendar of Events June - Dec. 2009

Please call 850-925-6121 for Reservations & Updated Information

Sat. June 6 - St. Marks NWR Photography Class - For all levels of digital photographers! Reservations required. 10 am - noon.

Sat. June 20 - St. Marks NWR Photo Club - 9 am until. Contact President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com For more information.

Wed. July 1 - Scallop season opens.

Sat. July 18 - St. Marks NWR Photo Club - 9 am until. Contact President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com For more information.

Sat. August 1 - Mound Archeology Tour meet at Picnic Pond at 5:30 p.m.

Sat. August 1- St. Marks NWR Photography Class - 9 am - noon. For all levels of digital photographers! Reservations required. Class size limited to 8.

Sat. Aug. 15 - St. Marks NWR Photo Club - 9 am until. Contact President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com For more information

Sat. Sep 5 - St. Marks NWR Photography Class - 9 am - noon. For all levels of digital photographers! Reservations required. Class size limited to 8.

Sat. Sept. 5 Lighthouse Evening Tour time 6 p.m. Must register, limited availability.

Sat. Sept. 19 - 24th Annual Coastal Cleanup and Awareness Day 9 am - 1 pm.

Sat. Sept. 19 - St. Marks NWR Photo Club - 9 am until. Contact President Tom Darragh at thomasd@talstar.com For more information

Sat. Oct 3 - St. Marks NWR Photography Class - For all levels of digital photographers! Reservations required. 10 am - noon.

Sat. Oct. 24 - 21st Monarch Butterfly Festival

Sat. Oct. 31 Magnolia Cemetery Tour - Celebrate Halloween with a historical tour of the cemetery of the ghost town of Magnolia. Meet at the Visitor Center at 4 p.m. Call to register.

Sat. Dec. 5 Historic Port Leon Tour - 2 p.m. Visitor Center.



Refuge Project Leader, James Burnett, teaches gun safety to Dana Robertson at 2009 "WHO" festival.

By Carole Robertson

Hints for Enjoying Your Visit

Take Your Binoculars

Binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras will help you get a close-up view of wildlife without disturbing them. Look for wildlife up in the trees and the sky as well as in the roadside pools.

Bring Your Field Guides

Guide books will assist you in identifying the more common north Florida native flora and fauna.

Start early and stay late

Mammals and birds are more active during the early morning hours and late afternoon.

Observe carefully

Be aware of potential dangers, snakes, poison ivy, etc. Observe common-sense rules with bears and alligators, don't get too close. Remember feeding alligators as well as all wildlife is prohibited.

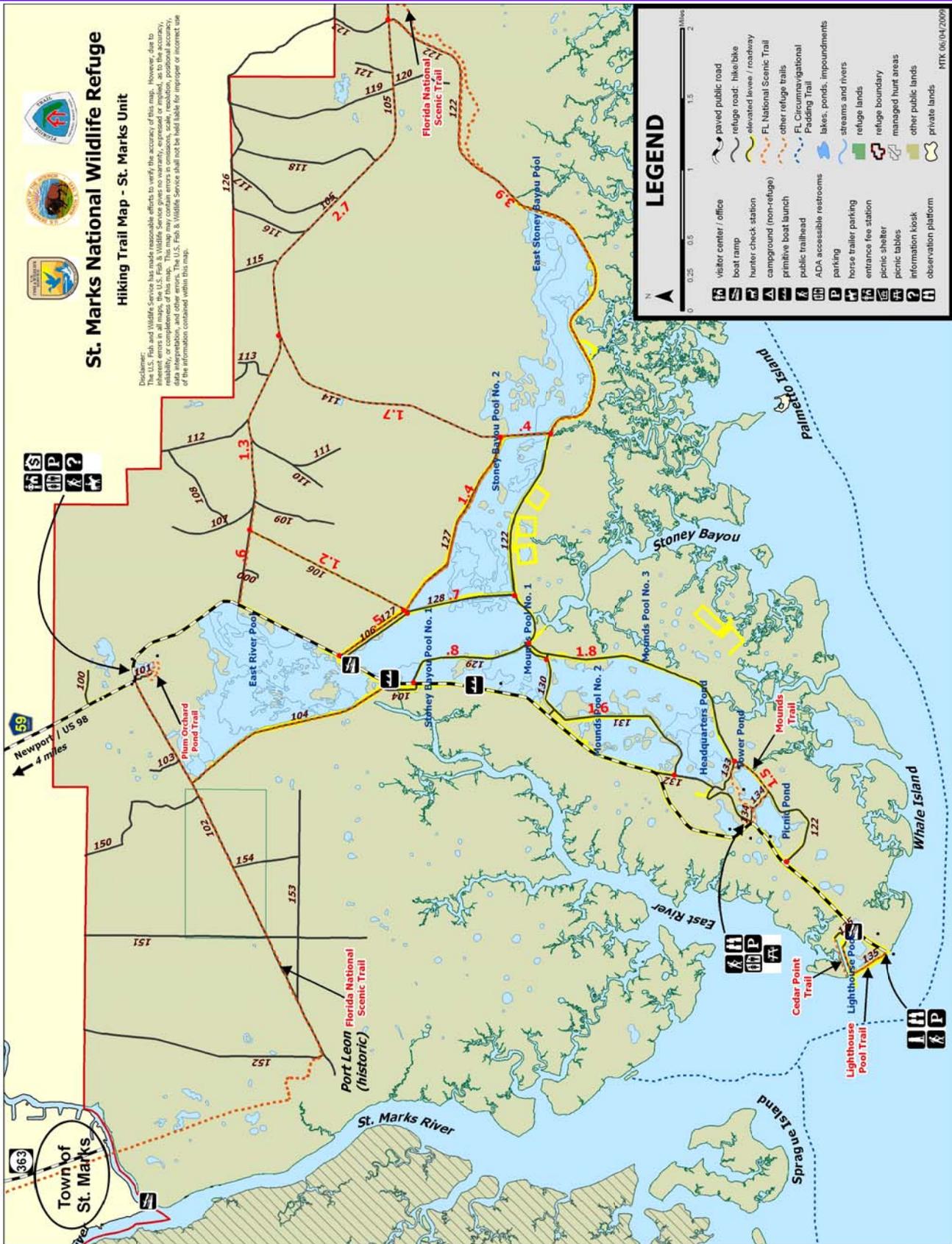
Dress appropriately

Insect repellent, sunscreen, proper hiking shoes and socks. Wear weather appropriate clothing.

Food

Other than chocolate bars, food is not for sale at the refuge, make sure to bring snacks or plan to visit nearby restaurants.

St. Marks Map with Trail Numbers





The picture above is a young longleaf pine that the fire passed around and has browned the needles. You can see the new growth in the young white needles of the growing tip.



Green growth of the grasses and pines within a week of the fire passing through the area.

On February 12 of this year, the St. Marks NWR fire management staff performed a prescribed fire, commonly called a controlled burn, in the stand of trees near the Visitor Center. The stand of trees is on a 3-year fire frequency for burning. The 12th was the best day based on the forecasted weather to use fire safely and obtain the resource objectives as stated in the prescribed fire plan. Objectives include using fire to reduce hazardous fuels, which are fire dependent plants like gallberry, wax myrtle, palmetto and saw grass, and burn through wetland transition zones to improve flatwoods salamander habitat. After the completion of the burn, I was approached with many questions about the visual effects of the fire in the stand of trees. One notable question was “Are the pine trees dead, since their leaves are reddish-brown?” Happily, I can say no, the pine trees are not dead. Pine trees are adapted to fire spreading through the under growth.

One adaptation is when the heat from the plants that are burning under the tree rises up through the branches of the tree, and the pine needles are heated up. As the moisture in the pine needles evaporates, the pine needles close around the branch. The end of each clump of pine needles or the end of the branch is where the branch continues to grow. This area at the end of the branch is called the apical meristem or growing tip. The growing tip is very important to the growth of the tree. The pine needles will thermally protect the growing tip by closing around it. Even when the needles that were heated turn reddish-brown, the growing tip is protected. When it is growing season, the growing tip will continue to grow and produce

branches and needles.

The brown needles will eventually fall to the forest floor to add nutrients to the soil. The fallen needles may later be part of the fuel load reduced next time the stand of trees is controlled burned.

Check out this area now to see how quickly plants regenerated after this burn.



Pines and other plants are shown after fire has moved through the area.

Two children sit in the early-arrival waiting area with jars of tadpoles, and other kids gather around to oogle. Another child sports a scraped knee, and another whines to a parent helper about a bus incident. We walk in to a typical day at Shadeville Elementary School, ready to learn about their 'going green' initiative. Shadeville serves nearly 700 children from towns southwest of Tallahassee.

Bethany Mathers, grade 5 teacher, is a primary force in the school's 'green' program. In October 2008, with the help of her four-member Green Committee, Bethany joined with the "Keep Wakulla County Beautiful" initiative to implement a school-wide recycling program. Bethany explains, "We have 45 containers from "Keep Wakulla County Beautiful", one in each classroom. The Student Council collects weekly from the classrooms, and at the end of the week, we take 40-100 lbs. of recycle material to the Wakulla County Recycle Center. Next year, we plan to expand the program to include other materials such as cardboard, but we'll need more bins."

The children of three St. Marks staff members attend Shadeville. Brigitte, age 10, and Daisy, age 7, daughters of Trixie Smith (Fire Crew); Marcus, age

11, son of Willie Lindsey (Fire Crew); and Tia, age 8, daughter of Lori Nicholson (EE Specialist) join us in Principal Susan Brazier's office for a round table discussion of Shadeville's program. All four students recycle at home, bring items to school for the bins, and think other schools should have similar programs. "It actually started with Coastal Clean-Up," says Brigitte, explaining the origin of the program. The students see 'going green' as important for the environment, "so bad stuff doesn't get into the water from all the trash," says Marcus. "If the middle school doesn't have a program, we could have a committee to help make one," offers Tia.

The students speak about other Shadeville programs that help the environment. "Where the Wild Things Are" is the Project Learning Tree (PLT) theme for this week. Every classroom is involved in this immersion: Daisy's grade is studying bats. Tia's and Marcus' grades are studying butterflies, and Brigitte's grade is dissecting owl pellets. On our way back to class, led by Tia and Daisy, we walk down enchanting hallways, immersed in the sea teeming with life, a huge diagram of the water cycle and how pollutants impact purity, forests full of wild creatures, and a spooky, dark bat cave with stalactites and dozens of bats

dancing from the ceiling. Daisy's words of wisdom: "If you learn more about them, then you can help them." Yes.

When the children are back in their classrooms, we move on to a classroom where Lori Nicholson is working with grade 5 students in a Project Learning Tree lesson on Whooping Cranes. The final activity is making a 'pizza' out of what cranes like best, and the students are putting delectables such as worms, rats, crabs and spiders on their 'pizza'. It's time to stop talking and start acting



on what we know is right for the environment. Many schools and families in Florida seem to have both awareness and concern. Local commissions and initiatives share and support their efforts. Shadeville Elementary School is a good model!

Education Update

As summer begins we say good bye to an old friend and look forward to starting anew with the promise of a new environmental education facility.

While the upcoming school year will pose logistical challenges we look forward to it with enthusiasm.

This school year we have been extremely busy and numbers certainly show it. So far for the 2009 fiscal year (since October 1, 2008), we have reached 7,589 students and teachers in educational programs. Quite an amazing feat. In the previous year we reached a total of 8,068 students and teachers. We are almost there and we

have until the end of September to reach our lofty goal.

Due to reduced refuge staffing during the summer, programs will be scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays only and will take place between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Final program and date availability will be determined by refuge staff. Weekend programs are limited and may be self-guided with materials checked out by the group's leaders.

To ensure the best program experience for everyone, self guided programs still must register with the refuge so there will be no logistical problems of multiple programs taking place at the same time

and place.

Refuge materials may be checked out if they are not already in use by a previously scheduled program. In cases where items are checked out, it is the responsibility of that organization to return those items in the same condition they were checked out. If any items are broken or damaged it will be the organizations responsibility to repair or replace said items.

If you are interested in becoming an education volunteer or if you would like to book a program call me at 850-925-6121 or email me at lori_nicholson@fws.gov

Lori Nicholson

Continued from the spring edition where the author set the tone of this adventure by describing the dawn of a foggy holiday on the edge of the refuge:

Back inside, I focused on the task at hand. Forks, glassware, roasting pan....why is there always so much grease in the bottom of a roasting pan?....tap-tap-tap....salad bowl, saucer....tap-tap-tap....what was that tapping sound behind me? I turned to find a face emerging from the fog. It was David, the refuge LE Ranger. He was dressed in camo and tall boots. His broad smile told me that something wonderful had happened. "Come in, come in!" I said, as I opened the door to greet him. "No. I'll get mud all over your rug." "I don't care. C'mon in!" David graciously removed his boots, and stepped into the house, his feet warm in his thick socks. He immediately asked, "Did Ken ever find his sailboat after the storm?" "No. I'm afraid not," I replied. David's smile grew even broader. "Well, I think I just did!" While following hog trails through the marsh early that morning, he had noticed something white sticking up above the grass. Hiking through the muck towards it, he came upon a little red and white sailboat. The daggerboard proudly stood tall above its hull, a distress signal, a cry for help to anyone who would listen. My heart burst with laughter when I heard his words. I ran to get my husband....

Hurricane Dennis had devastated the area three years earlier with its relentless back-surge. Under that unexpected wall of water, residents lost boats, cars, homes, irretrievable memories. Dennis set the bar for all the hurricanes to come. Ken's little sailboat was one of the casualties of that storm. He made countless kayak journeys deep into the refuge behind our home, searching the marsh along Walker's Creek for any sign of the vessel. Each trip, he towed back whatever he found, reuniting lost possessions with their owners. But he never found his sailboat. Still believing it was out there, Ken asked the refuge rangers to

please contact him if they ever came across it. This morning, David Moody, refuge LE Ranger, had done just that.

As the rising tide began to fill the bayou behind the house, we prepared for the rescue. A coil of rope was pulled from the garage. A roll of duct tape was put in an old sock to keep it dry. Gloves, paddles, cushions, all were gathered and placed in the kayak. This rescue would be a personal reunion between Ken and his little sailboat. He would simply tie her to the kayak and pull her home. It shouldn't take long. I would wait at the house. After carefully considering the location information provided by David, Ken paddled off into the fog. I waved, and silently began to plan a celebration dinner.

The sea fog waltzed in and out of the palm trees, stopping periodically to refresh a juniper or palmetto.....*roast beef. Yes. That would be a fitting meal for such a day....*The merganser navy, "bad hair" standing straight out behind their heads, stormed the bayou in search of fish, only to disappear as quickly as they had appeared.....*and little red potatoes browned in the pan beside it....*The pelican patrol was next to stumble comically through the mist. They, too, soon faded into the gray world.....*and maybe a keylime pie....*I stared into the marsh. Ken had been gone almost two hours. The liquid air parted, revealing the snag in front of our house. A merlin perched in the top. He, too, was searching the marsh for hidden treasure. At the base of the snag, a long, yellow form drifted into focus. Ken's kayak. Running out onto the porch, I yelled, "Did you find her?" A solemn "no" was the only response. I went directly to the phone. I called David. I asked him to repeat the directions once again. He offered to get me the GPS coordinates the next day. I thanked him, and turned to Ken. "We still have good water. Let's both jump in the canoe and give it another try." Out on the marsh, we found a scuttled catamaran, a section of floating dock, but not the sailboat. There would be no celebration that night. "David described the boat perfectly. It's got to be your sail-

boat. And, it's got to be right there where we were."

Early the next morning, the phone rang. It was David. "I'm standing right here with your little sailboat. If you drive down your road, I'll meet you and we can hike out to the location." Ken and I grabbed our toothbrushes with one hand and dressed with the other. We jumped into the truck. David greeted us with a smile and a wave. He glanced down at my feet. "Your boots are too short for the deep water." Reluctantly, I told them to go without me. I waited at the edge of the forest. When they returned, they were covered in mud and gloriously happy. They had moved the boat close to a little creek so that she could be floated home on the high tide that afternoon. With a hug and a most appreciative "thank you", we bid farewell to David.

Armed with determination, we set out for the third time. The fog, having danced for days, had moved on to bless another place. Sunshine now bathed the refuge in brilliant gold. We paddled up to the head of Walker's Creek. Great egrets watched from junipers along the banks as we glided by. When we ran out of water, we beached the canoe and began to hike north through the marsh.

We scanned the top of the grass for the white daggerboard. The sticky mud grabbed at my boots and threatened to pull them under. As I fought to regain control, I remembered hiking with the Girl Scouts. We called mud like this, "germagoo". It always swallowed a few sneakers as we hiked. "I see it!" Ken pointed ahead. Inspired, we surged forward. I fell far behind. As I dragged my paddle and stepped high, the marsh grass stuck up like a "buzz cut" coiffure. It cut my legs above my boots. (Note to self: Do not wear shorts when hiking

On the edge of the refugecontinued.

the marsh). Here and there, the grass had been combed by the wind and formed a protective umbrella for a miniature world beneath. I thought of Ratty, Toad, Badger and their friends from *Wind in the Willows*. Their world was much like this marsh. Imagine being small enough to scurry through that world. "False alarm!" Ken shouted. "Just an egret." The egret flew off above the marsh grass. I noticed that Ken seemed to follow.

It was not long before I clearly saw the white daggerboard rising up out of the marsh grass. Ken worked quickly, patching a hole in the hull with lengths of duct tape. I pulled out the daggerboard and emptied the water from my left boot. A gray marsh rat, neat and tidy, emerged from inside the boat. He cordially smiled at Ken and me, then shook his head as if to say, "It's about time you two showed up! We've been tending your little boat for three years! Don't lose her again!" We thanked him as he pushed a reluctant periwinkle from the deck and disap-

peared into that tiny world beneath the grass.

Launching the sailboat, Ken paddled his way among the grass towards the open water. On the bank, I desperately tried to keep up. Near the canoe, Ken's creek disappeared underground and he was forced to portage across a grass barrier. I pushed the canoe out into the main creek and jumped into the back seat with my paddle. I quickly learned why all those paintings of Native Americans in canoes show them kneeling just behind center. I had no control whatsoever of that big canoe. The current pushed me from bank to bank. Just as I decided that traveling backwards was an acceptable alternative, I began to relax into the rhythm of the tide and wind. Following Ken in his sinking sailboat, I watched the waterline go from two inches below the stern to two inches above it. Bit by bit, Ken moved forward, eventually sitting on the daggerboard to keep dry. When the sailboat started to roll, we beached it on a sandy patch of marsh to drain the hull.

There on the beach we laughed and talked about our adventure. Swarms of no-see-ums, in long, grasping fingers, silently wrapped around us, just as the sea fog had done days before. The air was so thick with them that I had to cover my face with my shirt. Still, we laughed as we scratched. Finally, with the salt water completely drained, we wrapped a stick with duct tape and fashioned a plug for the hole in the stern.

On our way again, we caught sight of our home in the distance. Soon we would reach our destination. As I rhythmically moved the paddle from one side to the other, cool salt water dripped on my legs, soothing my wounds. Not far ahead, Ken guided his little boat forward, content in the knowledge that she was finally coming home. As we floated across the refuge boundary and into the bayou behind our house, the sun was setting. The world was preparing for rest. We would dream about this incredible adventure for years. Yes, life was good out here on the edge of the refuge. It was truly a time for celebration.....

St. Vincent CCP continued from pg. 2

How Can You Help?

- You can help us the most by getting involved. Give us your thoughts and ideas regarding future management of the Refuge.
- Help us identify potential issues related to refuge management, wildlife-dependant recreational uses, habitat protection, and more.
- You can also assist us in exploring what opportunities or alternatives might be available to resolve potential issues.
- **Join us at upcoming public scoping meetings: July 15 at the St. Joe State Buffer Preserve and July 16 at the Apalachicola Com-**

munity Building. Both meetings are from 6-9pm.

- Your comments can stimulate



Staff photo of a Sambar hind at St. Vincent NWR.

new ideas in other participants.

- You can also provide input by writing or e-mailing us.
- Finally, your assistance is needed to get the word out about this process. Suggest to your family that they too get involved.

You are an important part of the process; please join us.

For questions, additional information or comments contact:

St. Vincent NWR CCP
P.O. Box 447
Apalachicola, FL 32329
Phone:910-378-6689 (Planner) or

850-653-8808 (Refuge)

Email: StVincentCCP@fws.gov



The photo club would like to extend congratulations to our “Volunteers of the Year” Mike and Carole Robertson. They have been a tremendous help in photo club and refuge projects. They have worked very hard on a lot of behind the scenes projects as well as refuge volunteering. Of course they had help from their daughters Joan and Diana, a couple of our younger members.

As I have mentioned before we work hard to promote our refuge in projects and volunteering, but we also have a fun time sharing tips, photos and making friends

Don't forget our club is open to all ages and skill levels. We encourage families to come together; we strive to bring young people back to nature. If you have any suggestions or ideas for family or young people projects, please let us know.

We have new photo club cards in the Welcome Center Book Store, so come by and take a look. Also check out the 2008-2009 Crane Fly-Over DVD now available.

A reminder that we will be displaying photos of our Refuge and Wakulla Springs in two art shows: the Tallahassee Senior Center May 13-July 13 and the Gadsden Art Center June 17-August 11. Come by and look at all the talent, and our love for nature.

REFUGE REGULATIONS

No Littering, help keep your refuge clean!

Cooking Fires are permitted in designated picnic areas only.

Pets must be on a leash and under control of owners at all times.

Collecting or taking of artifacts, natural features, animals or plants on government property is prohibited.

Weapons, fireworks, or firearms are prohibited.

Come by and visit us! Our monthly meetings are the third Saturday of every month at 9am. This summer the meetings may be scheduled at different meeting locations, so if you have any questions contact me at: thomasd@talstar.com.



In March we had our second anniversary and postponed our celebration until our May meeting. We had wagon rides, door prizes, and great food.

The nature of photo classes at the refuge will change in the coming months to accommodate changes in the environmental education facility. Monthly photo classes will continue at the refuge and will consist of a nature photography walk along with digital photography instruction led by Ranger Barney Parker. The class will include personalized instruction on how to use your digital camera for nature photography and how to apply your knowledge to actual situations in nature. Ranger Parker will set up situations on the refuge and challenge students to solve the problems of photographing them. Parker, a former biology teacher, will

also discuss plants and animals in their environments. Since this is an “outside” class, bring bug juice,

water, a notebook, your camera and your camera manual.

Class size will be limited to eight or less students.



What does this young hawk's behavior signify? Could it be defiance or dominance? What do you think?

Some walking will be required. Classes will be held the first Saturday of every month. Participants will meet at the Visitor Center at 9:00 am and the class will end at noon. **Call the refuge at 925-6121 to register.**

Book Nook

Janie Nelson

Father's Day is coming up soon, and you can show your support for the refuge by shopping for Dad at our bookstore/gift shop.

Fill his backpack with sun screen, bug repellent, a binocular strap, a bookmark and/or one of the many books and field guides we have on our shelves. Top it off with a gift the whole family will enjoy for years to come -- the newly released DVD of the whooping crane flyover, produced by our own St. Marks Photo Club. It's only \$10, and if you haven't seen it, you don't know what you're missing. It's a prime example of the incredible talent of our Photo-Club members.

Also, don't forget to pick up one of the beautiful St. Marks cards, also courtesy of our wildlife “shooters.”

Write a personal message to Dad, telling him how much you love him for making nature a part of your life.

Keep the bookstore in mind, anytime you have a birthday or special event and want to give something unique.

If you've been in the store lately, you've probably seen our sale table. Currently, we've marked down the Wild Bryde earrings, several books, mugs, pins, topo maps, and kids' T-shirts – all good gift items.

Many of you may be wondering, “Who are you, and where's Jayne?” Jayne Parker, who devoted three years of outstanding work to the bookstore, decided recently that she wanted to spend more of her time as a hospice volunteer. I, a long-time St. Marks volunteer, had just retired as an editor at the Tallahassee Democrat

and wanted to do more at the refuge. I mentioned it to Robin and, before I knew what happened, I was stocking shelves and trying to keep away from the tasty organic chocolate.

In the words of former refuge manager Joe White: “You've got to watch out what you say to Robin.”

Jayne devoted three years to the bookstore, and she's going to be a tough act to follow, but I'll do my best to keep up her good work.

If you have any ideas for the bookstore, let me know. My e-mail address is

janie_nelson@comcast.net.

Happy shopping!

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge
 P.O. Box 68
 St. Marks, FL 32355
 (850) 925-6121
<http://www.fws.gov/saintmarks>

St. Marks Staff Additions Robin Will

Sign up for membership

ST. MARKS REFUGE ASSOCIATION

PLEASE CHECK MEMBERSHIP



◇ Individual/Family	\$ 25.00
◇ Organization	\$ 50.00
◇ Senior (over 62)	\$ 20.00
◇ Supporting	\$ 50.00
◇ Student (under 16)	\$ 5.00
◇ Class	\$ 10.00
◇ Life	\$250.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (home): _____

Phone (office): _____

Email: _____

Gift membership Y / N: Or honorarium Y / N

In memory of: _____

The refuge staff welcomes **Travis Pollard**, who hails from North Carolina originally. Travis worked as an intern at Carolina Sandhills NWR before coming to Florida to work for the Florida Division of Forestry as a firefighter. He is now a Forestry Technician/Firefighter and is on a one year term position.

Paige Landrum joins us on June 8 as our Youth Conservation Corps enrollee for the summer. She will be an upcoming senior at Wakulla High School and will be answering phones and helping visitors and staff each week day until July 31.

Also joining us for the summer is **Daniel Wells**, a sophomore at Tallahassee Community College in environmental science. Daniel was selected to be our Student Training Experience Program employee and he will be hired on as a temporary Biological Science Aid. His duties will include working with the biologists to check eagle nesting areas, monitor gopher tortoise burrows, tag and monitor exotic plants, collect native wiregrass seeds and much more.

Another exciting edition to the extended refuge family is the birth of **Raelynn Jo Byrd Bevis**, daughter of our very own Ranger Heather Bevis her husband Todd Bevis, and little sister to Cayden Bevis. Congratulations to a beautiful family.