



U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service

# Southeast Region

## SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

OCTOBER 2008 NEWSLETTER

Home Page  
  Behind the Scenes  
  Bragging Rights  
  Hats Off  
  Photo Album  
  Wage Grade  
  Visitor Services

### Southeast Region Spill Response Strike Team responds to Louisiana oil spill

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Region Spill Response Strike Team and Delta National Wildlife Refuge leaders responded to an oil spill in New Orleans, La. providing wildlife rescue, contaminants expertise, and damage control to federal, state, and private organizations and companies to help mitigate the damage to fish and wildlife. For a month following the spill, members of the strike team continued to support the cleanup efforts.

On July 23, 2008, as much as 9,000 barrels of Number 6 fuel oil were released in the Mississippi River following an accident involving a ship and barge. Ships and generators use Number 6 fuel oil -- also known as bunker C fuel -- to run their engines. This oil type is notorious for its poor behavior at previous spills by spontaneously sinking and re-floating, as well as covering wildlife in a thick black sticky mess.

The spill stopped commercial shipping and recreational boating on about 80 miles of river for about a week. The closure extended from River Mile 98 in New Orleans south to the Southwest Pass Sea Buoy at the mouth of the Mississippi. The oil in the river, on shorelines, and in adjacent wetlands in the area was a significant threat to fish, wildlife, and habitat quality.

Responders and the public reported 879 oiled birds and other wildlife, but most were still mobile and escaped capture. At least 55 birds, mammals, and alligators were captured for rehabilitation, with about 32 being successfully cleaned and released. A few un-oiled but dangerous alligators near cleanup crews were captured and relocated by the Wildlife Group.

"The challenge with this spill was the complex nature of the terrain, combined with the length of riverbank we had to search – in excess of 200 miles of riverbank from the impact zone in New Orleans downstream to Venice, La." said Buddy Goatcher, contaminants specialist with the Lafayette Ecological Service Office, and operations team chief for this incident. "We responded to public and other responder's sightings, and we also searched from our helicopters, airboats, and other vehicles. We located and captured oiled wildlife and transported them to the rehabilitation team in Venice."

The quick-response Strike Team included 15 environmental contaminants specialists, logistics, and External Affairs staff from the



Oiled great egret in the marshes between the Mississippi River and the levy near Belle Chasse at mile marker 74. Photo by Tom MacKenzie.

Service who responded on a rotational basis, in four to 20 day tours.

“Our high visibility, and constant presence at the Command Post made us a player in the spill response,” said Felix Lopez, environmental contaminants specialist from the Caribbean Field Office. “We participated in strategy meetings, press conferences, and worked with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Scientific Support Coordinator and the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team.”

Lopez described the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team as an interagency team headed by NOAA that assesses oiled shorelines and recommends or evaluates cleanup options.

The Strike Team used several small outboard powered boats, surface drive mud boats, airboats, helicopters, and a floatplane to assess the impacts, make suggestions to reduce and mitigate the spill’s damage to wildlife and their habitat, and rescue oiled wildlife for rehabilitation and release.

At least four personnel from Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex and Delta NWR, near the mouth of the Mississippi River, also sprang into action to battle the onslaught of the mixture of light sheen and black tar that formed after the oil reacted to the water temperature and evaporation.

“We did our best to stop this oil from hitting the marsh here at Delta National Wildlife Refuge,” said Jack Bohannon, refuge manager at Delta NWR. The refuge staff worked to protect the refuge by placing booms at key locations to try to deflect the oil from entering the refuge.

Trained experts from U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Service also supported the Wildlife Group’s response team by using their wildlife knowledge and professional skills to capture oiled birds, mammals, and reptiles. They also used live traps and cannon-fired nets to remove animals from the oiled marshes in between the river and the levee.

An additional six boats also supported the Delta NWR booming efforts from Clean Harbors Environmental Services, a specialized cleanup company well-versed in recovery and response. Delta NWR reported only a light sheen in the area, but had to suspend use of dredging materials to create wetlands as the dredging materials had been contaminated.

Apparently, some of the oil that sunk and headed downstream was pulled up by dredging operations near the mouth of the Mississippi. Delta National Wildlife Refuge uses dredged material to create wildlife habitat and reconstruct the disappearing wetlands. The wetlands there have been disappearing partially due to the lack of sediment renourishment when the mighty Mississippi River was channeled for navigation, sending the rich sediments deep into the Gulf of Mexico, instead of creating marsh habitats with natural sediment deposits from the river.

“Most of the birds that died from the spill were ducks, often covered in oil,” said Bill Starkel, Southeast Regional Spill Coordinator, based in Atlanta. “Wading birds tended to be oiled in the front -- from their beaks to their legs -- from feeding in the oiled water.”

The Strike Team assessed the impact of the oil spill and provided advice and support to the Incident Command led by the United States Coast Guard. They also conducted hazing to protect wildlife by using 100 propane cannons (loud automatically fired

noisemakers), an airboat, bird-scare balloons, Mylar tape and hand-held noisemakers similar to bottle rockets launched from flare and starter pistols. The hazing intent was to deter the birds from being contaminated by the oil pooled along the banks through the nearly 100-mile stretch of the Mississippi, from New Orleans to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Tom MacKenzie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia*

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



Jennifer Bridgers of Coastal Animal Hospital with Juvenile Bald Eagle Number 12 just before release. Photo by Don Bridgers.

### **Outer Banks, North Carolina community rescues bald eagle**

July 9 was a regular beach day for Cole Yeatts of the Ocean Rescue Team. Regular, that is, until a bald eagle flew up to his four-wheeler and landed on his lightbar. "We had had reports that an immature bald eagle was either sick or injured and in the area," Yeatts said. He promptly covered the bird with a blanket and contacted the Dare County Animal Control Office for assistance. This began a string of events that took the bird from the beach to the Coastal Animal Hospital in Nags Head to the Eastern Wildlife Center in Greenville and finally to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge for release on Wednesday, August 27.

Dennis Stewart, wildlife biologist for Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, said, "This situation is not unheard of. In fact, this is the second case this year that I'm aware of on the Outer Banks. We caught another immature bald eagle on Pea Island earlier this summer. Same situation- no injuries or illnesses- it just hadn't been able to take care of itself successfully and was starving or thirsting to death. Young

bald eagles have a harder time in a salt environment. Finding fresh water and food can present problems for them. We caught that eagle on the refuge and it ended up going to the Raptor Center in Charlotte for rehab."

Not all "sick or injured wildlife" stories have happy endings. Especially with birds, it can be touch and go. "There's a critical period with birds that are weak. They instinctively know to avoid humans, so often they're so weak by the time they can be captured and fed that they are unable to recover," added Stewart.

Bald Eagle Number 12 for the Eastern Wildlife Center was the July 9, capture. Mark Ansley, Director for the Center, described the bird's condition as "sound physically, but emaciated. There were no fractures." He added, "The bird was fed and watered and treated for parasites and infection. Then, we moved him to a flight cage."

And, fly he did. Though the bird could only fly 'short hops' when it arrived, by the third day, it was able to fly up to the 10-foot perch. "By the fifth day, he was able to fly the length of the cage; the sixth day was able to stop in flight and perch." Ansley said.

The success story of Juvenile Bald Eagle Number 12 is the perfect example of a community working together. Concerned



Juvenile Bald Eagle Number 12 immediately after take-off. Photo by Don Bridgers.

individuals called in the alarm. The Ocean Rescue Team, Dare County Animal Control, and several private individuals and businesses set out to find the bird. The Eastern Wildlife Center, established in 1992 (a licensed, 501-c tax exempt wildlife rehabilitation organization) was called for guidelines on husbandry, and The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for whom the bald eagle is a trust resource, was called for transport and release.

On release day, Ansley described the eagle as having “a weight of seven pounds, good body mass, excellent flight skills. All sight and hearing are normal. We have not forced him to fly; he flies at his pleasure. Now he goes straight up against the netting and walks, which is a sign for release.”

The release occurred just after 5:30 pm on August 27, on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Jennifer Bridgers of Coastal Animal Hospital, who coordinated care of the bird from the beginning, handled the actual release. The eagle immediately gained altitude, made a huge circle and flew directly over the small crowd that had come to celebrate the release. After flying several large circles around the release site, it flew out of sight.

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

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



Scott cleans raceways: All 104 outdoor raceways need to be cleaned every week. The YCC enrollees were a big help in performing this task. Photo by Andrew Currie.

### **Local youths spend summer working at Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery**

Clay County, Tennessee residents Kayla Vaughn, Danielle Weber, and Scott Brown spent this summer working at the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery as Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) enrollees. Kayla was enrolled in the YCC Program last year and was brought back this year as the Youth Leader. Kayla, Danielle, and Scott helped the hatchery staff with feeding fish, collecting dead fish, cleaning raceways, moving fish around the hatchery, distributing fish to local waters, performing janitorial work, maintaining the public fishing area, and carrying out grounds maintenance. The three objectives of the YCC Program are to accomplish needed conservation work on public lands, provide gainful summer employment to youth for approximately eight weeks, and develop an understanding and appreciation in participating youth of the nation's natural environment and heritage. Should funding be available next year, the hatchery will be soliciting applications from Clay County students in late spring. The hatchery anticipates being able to hire one boy and one girl. Applicants need to be 15 through 18 years of age and are

chosen at random. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Andrew Currie, Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery, Celina, Tennessee*

### Gulf sturgeon caviar

Panama City Fisheries Resources Office biologists, interns, and volunteers spent two months this spring on the Apalachicola River, Florida, conducting a project to collect Gulf sturgeon eggs. We placed anchored commercial buffing pads in three potential spawning areas to collect the Gulf sturgeon eggs which are adhesive during the spawning process. Up to 90 pads were inspected every other day for Gulf sturgeon eggs with eggs being removed and brought back to the office for hatching and preservation. We collected over 200 eggs at all three sites of which one of the sites was newly confirmed. In addition, we were able to document a prolonged spawning period spanning 41 days.



Gulf sturgeon egg on pad compared to a dime. Photo taken by Jake Osborne, intern.



Dan Scollan, intern, and Ted Hoehn, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, inspecting a collection pad for Gulf sturgeon eggs. Photo by Frank Parauka.

*Submitted by Frank Parauka, Panama City Fisheries Resources Office, Florida*

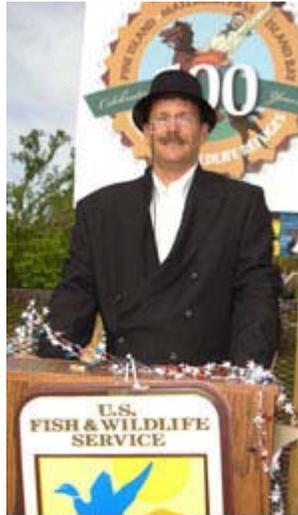
### Red Wolf Recovery Program plans fall education workshop

The Red Wolf Recovery Program will hold its fall educator workshop on Friday, October 17, from 9:a.m. until 4 p.m. Workshop details and an itinerary can be found at [www.fws.gov/redwolf](http://www.fws.gov/redwolf) under the Interpretive Programs link. The workshop provides an opportunity for formal and non-formal educators to learn about the 21 year history of red wolf restoration in northeastern North Carolina and get acquainted with the Far Traveler curriculum. Each participant will receive a copy of the curriculum, a "Recovering a Species" video, and a howling cd. This is a hands-on workshop. The afternoon will be spent in the field looking at red wolf tracks with a wildlife biologist. Each participant will have the opportunity to make track casts for use in teaching red wolf education. For further information, please contact [diane\\_hendry@fws.gov](mailto:diane_hendry@fws.gov) or call the Red Wolf Recovery Program office at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge at telephone 252-473-1131, ext. 246.



2006 Far Traveler workshop participants make track casts from red wolf prints. Photo by Diane Hendry.

*Submitted by Diane Hendry, Red Wolf Recovery Program, Alligator River NWR, Manteo, NC*



Kevin Godsea portrays President Teddy Roosevelt in winning float. Photo by Toni Westland.

### J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR Complex takes first place in Fourth of July Parade

The theme of the 2008 Sanibel Island Fourth of July Parade was Blast from the Past. The title was fitting for the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge Complex, since it is celebrating the 100th birthday of three of its refuges: Pine Island, Matlacha Pass, and Island Bay NWRs. These refuges were established in 1908 by President Teddy Roosevelt, so it was very fitting to have Teddy Roosevelt on the float! Kevin Godsea, lead refuge ranger of the Complex and future manager of Cape Romaine NWR, played Teddy Roosevelt on the winning float. As Hail to the Chief played, the crowd knew a president was arriving. Kevin stood proud proclaiming the dedication of the three refuges.

"What a great way to educate the public about the establishment of our three refuges," said Complex manager Paul Tritaik. "Winning the coveted Blast from the Past award was just a bonus."

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



Winning Fourth of July float for best music and theatrical performance. Photo by Toni Westland.



A dragonfly is spotted in the grass. Photo by Doug Hunt.

### Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge initiates Colt Capers

The Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge hosted the first Colt Capers program on September 5. Colt Capers is an adventure program for pre-schoolers. The program is named after young cranes, also called colts. The children and their guardians come out to the refuge to learn about a species, do a craft, and then get outdoors for exploration. The program will be held on the first Friday of each month and will explore a different animal found on the refuge or nearby.

Eight participants and their parents and/or grandparents came on September 5, to learn about dragonflies. They sat around refuge staff member Emily Neidigh who read the book *Are you a Dragonfly?* They looked at photographs of different dragonflies, counted their wings and their legs, and talked about what colors the dragonflies were and what they might eat.

After story time, the children made dragonflies with translucent, veiny wings and big, puffy eyes. It was soon time to take those dragonflies outside to fly, while the group searched for real dragonflies in the grass and at the pond on the nature trail. Several dragonflies were spotted, as well as lubber



Refuge staff, Emily Neidigh watches as the kids test how their dragonflies fly after completing the craft. Photo by Doug Hunt.

grasshoppers which almost stole the show by being slightly less mobile and easier to view. This month, the children will learn about alligators.

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

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Workshop participants learn about native plants that can help stabilize the shoreline. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

### **First Florida Living Shoreline Workshop hosted in Panama City**

The Florida Panhandle Coastal Program catalyzed formation of the Panhandle Living Shoreline Initiative in 2006 to discourage coastal armoring and promote a softer approach. On Friday, June 13, 2008, Initiative partners hosted a free public workshop to spread the word. It was our lucky day when over 75 percent of the 156 people who registered showed up to learn about what living shorelines are, where it's appropriate to construct them, how to get permits, and who can help. Attendees represented folks from all our target groups. We hope this is the first of many more workshops to come for Florida!

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

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### **Recovery of endangered freshwater mussels through the use of cryopreservation**

Employees at the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center are working on new techniques to help in the recovery efforts of freshwater mussels. One potential method for the preservation and recovery of such unionid species is the collection, cryopreservation, and storage of sperm and glochidia. This would allow the preservation of genetic stocks, the transfer of genes from wild populations to hatchery stocks, and the transfer of genetic material between wild populations. Center staff evaluated the toxicity of several cryoprotectants at three concentrations on glochidia to determine survival percentages for cryopreservation experiments. With the success of those trials, the staff is looking forward to expanding their studies in the near future.



Southern rainbow mussel displaying. FWS Photo.

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



Several wood storks that landed at Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia for a few days in late August, 2008. Photo by Haile Macurdy.

### New visitors at Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery

Tropical storm Fay brought a couple of rainy days to Georgia. "Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery didn't get any damage from the storm; but, it did seem to bring some of our old friends back to the hatchery" said Haile Macurdy, assistant manager.

It was remarkable to see several wood storks hanging around the ponds. Wood storks are large, white, bald-headed, wading birds, and they are the only stork species breeding in the United States. Often, Warm Springs has assisted with producing forage for several partners' wood stork management and recovery programs.

*Submitted by Jaci Zelko, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia*



Close-up photo of adult wood stork. Photo by George Gentry.



A portable platform (a flatbed truck) to give a good vantage point for the Big Sit participants. Photo by Bucket Taylor.

### The Big Sit: A tailgate party for birders on two North Carolina national wildlife refuges!

The 2008 Big Sits on Alligator and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge are scheduled for October 12. The annual Big Sit is a competitive bird watching extravaganza that is both national and international in scale. The folks at each location count and identify bird species from sunrise to sunset from a circle. All tallies are recorded, and rankings are posted for "Top Spots" by number and "Top States" by cumulative number. View 2007 results and see the plans for 2008 at <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx>.

This year, the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society will be hosting the Big Sits on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Both sites were part of the Big Sit extravaganza last year, with Pea Island placing fifth in the nation, identifying 95 species of birds. The Big Sit at Alligator River identified an impressive 45 species. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

*Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River and Pea Island NWR, Manteo, North Carolina*

### Using LiDAR to aid in determining beach lighting protection zone

Along the Gulf coast in the panhandle of Florida, Walton County is working with the Panama City Field Office to establish a lighting ordinance to protect sea turtles and other coastal wildlife. Using a digital terrain model generated from LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data within the GIS, the Panama City Field Office conducted viewshed analyses to determine the visibility of lights along the 26-mile coastline at various distances landward of the mean high water. This information was then used to establish the zone within which landowners must install wildlife lighting.



Image generated from ArcGIS.

>Photo on left: Example result of one of the visibility analyses conducted using simulated four-story high buildings (green points) as viewer locations 400 feet inland (purple line) from the shoreline. The light green shading represent areas visible from the simulated four-story buildings; the mauve shading areas are not visible.



Aerial photo showing the dune systems within the analysis area draped on top of a hillshade. Image generated from ArcGIS.

*Submitted by Paul Lang, Panama City Ecological Services and Fisheries Resources Field Office, Florida*

### Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Helps school system secure grant for Fishing in the Schools Program

When Brian Moore of Union Chapel Elementary School in Jamestown, Kentucky, left for summer school in July, he packed a tackle box and prepared to learn things like roll casting and how to tie a Palomar knot. Through the assistance of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Brian served as the representative for Union Chapel School which received a 2008/2009 Future Fisherman Foundation Physical Education National Fishing and Boating Grant. The Physical Education program provides funding and training for educators to design and deliver engaging, hands-on fishing and boating education as a regular part of their curriculum. A \$2,500.00 grant enables teachers to purchase equipment, secure transportation for field trips, and receive specialized training.



George Smith, president for the Louisville, Kentucky chapter of Trout Unlimited, works with Wolf Creek NFH Project Leader James Gray to show local Physical Education teachers how to properly tie knots for fly fishing. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

“We have received many outstanding grant applications since the inception of this grant program,” said Anne Danielski, executive director of the Future Fisherman Foundation. “The 2008 applications were exceptionally strong, and we can’t wait to see how these teachers implement these plans with students across the country this year.”

To date, the grant program, now in its sixth year, has reached over 80,000 students in over 300 schools. For the 2008/2009 award year, Union Chapel is one of 76 schools in 32 states to receive the grant. Of the 76 schools, approximately 15 of those are located

in the Southeast and only one from Kentucky. Although the grant was awarded to Union Chapel, the Fishing in the Schools program will be implemented in all four elementary schools in Russell County. The grant was used to purchase spin cast rod reels and fly fishing equipment. In addition, the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. has purchased supplemental materials such as casting targets and pledge cards.

On September 19, the hatchery hosted all of the county's Physical Education teachers for a day of hands-on training. Through the help of Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc, the Louisville, Kentucky Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the hatchery's staff, all of the teachers received a day full of fun, fishing training, lunch and snacks, and tours of the hatchery. Equipment purchased with the grant funding also was distributed. The Fishing in the Schools program is expected to begin in the schools in early October.

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



Melissa Bimbi (third from left) poses with fellow crewmates aboard the RV Georgia Bulldog. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Photo.

### **All in a week's work...with turtles, that is**

Melissa Bimbi, Endangered Species biologist in the Charleston Field Office, spent a week at sea aboard the RV Georgia Bulldog, assisting the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources with sea turtle research. While trawling transects offshore from Brunswick, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia, the goal was to capture as many sea turtles as possible in the nets of the research vessel. Short trawls were conducted and nets were checked frequently to reveal any potential catches. During the course of the week, thirteen loggerhead sea turtles and one Kemp's Ridley sea turtle were caught. As the sea turtles were caught, they were hoisted aboard and underwent general health assessments where the turtles were measured, weighed, and tagged. Blood samples also were taken from each turtle so Melissa got to sharpen her "vampire" skills while on board. The blood samples that were collected will be analyzed for a number of things but primarily the environmental contaminant Polybrominated Diphenyl Ether ( PBDE).

PBDE is a chemical that is commonly used in flame retardant materials, but it is showing up in increasing concentrations in the environment.

All of the captured turtles appeared to be in good condition. However, the Kemp's Ridley and one of the loggerheads each had a missing rear flipper, a rather common injury for sea turtles that encounter sharks! In between all the sea turtle captures, bycatch was identified, counted, and weighed before being tossed back. The bycatch included many species of fish, invertebrates, sharks, and rays. After a long, hot week, Melissa was ready to get back to firm ground, but she eagerly awaits her next opportunity to work closely with these magnificent creatures. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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

### A Refuge Discovery Series: connecting people with nature

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is providing numerous opportunities this year for people to connect with the refuge. The Refuge Discovery Series, sponsored by the Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is a monthly program allowing people to learn about wildlife photography, bird identification, and wood duck banding. Participants also took a closer look at amphibians and reptiles, insect and butterfly identification, and animal tracks and signs. The series even included a night of star gazing and astronomy. People also investigated the refuge's aquatic wildlife by getting in the water and looking for mussels. On a warm August day, a mussel biologist led a discussion of mussel ecology and had participants find live mussels in a shallow bed. Many families have become more connected with the world of nature on Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Secretary of the Friends group, Vicki Miller, shows excitement at finding a mussel during the Refuge Discovery Series. Photo by Joan Stevens.

*Submitted by Joan Stevens, Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Paris, Tennessee*



Tim Coates and Frida Powers-Coates of Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery. Photo by Rosla Plant.

### Warm Springs connects scouts with nature

On September 13, The Chattahoochee Council of Boy Scouts held their 17th annual retreat to promote Duty to God and Country Awards in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing, and Girl Scouts. Over 300 participants took part in a round robin of local sites including the LittleWhite House, Historic Pools, and the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery. Rosla Plant, hatchery park ranger, and the Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery provided tours and activities for the group. Mini stations were set up in the Friends' room to highlight the Service's work, including invasive species, confiscated law enforcement items showcasing illegal importation of threatened and endangered species, knot tying and cleaning and filleting fish. Other topics were backyard habitat, monofilament recycling, designated recycling efforts of the Warm Springs facility, and employment opportunities and volunteering. The most popular station, pollinators, featured a live working bee hive maintained and demonstrated by Student Conservation Associate Sandra Deitz. All scouts were advised of the many facets of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Handouts on various stations were available as well as stickers and tattoos. Information about the Friends group, potential scout projects at the hatchery, and Biologist in Training educational opportunities also were shared with the scout leaders.

The event was a success as judged by the comments of one of the earlier troops. They told Rosla Plant, they had completed all of their day's activities and wanted to return to the hatchery as it was their favorite. Those who helped make the event happen included Friends of Warm Springs Hatchery members Jim Coates, Frida Powers-Coates, Mike Plant, Chris and Melissa Greenfield, Anastasia and Haile Macurdy, and Garrett Murphy; Student Conservation Associate Sandra Deitz; and hatchery employee Rosla Plant.



Sandra Deitz and Frida Powers-Coates. Photo by Rosla Plant.

*Submitted by Rosla Plant, Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Georgia*



L - R: Leif Karnuth, Richard Smith, Matt Ellington, Eddie Harsh, T.J. Prisco, Lamar Dorris, Chad Fondren, and Henry Sansing. Photo by Dusty Dendy

### **Four refuge complexes help complete timber cruise of the Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge**

For many years, the North Mississippi Refuges Complex has been without a forester, and Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge needed a timber cruise. Managing the refuge's forest without a cruise is like shooting in the dark. Hiring a private firm to complete a professional cruise would cost the refuge thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars. The only other option was to seek help from other refuge stations.

This spring, staff from three Mississippi refuges and one Tennessee refuge participated in a team effort to complete the needed timber cruise of the 9,700-acre Refuge. Staff from Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge led the effort, with help from the Theodore Roosevelt Refuges Complex, West Tennessee Refuges Complex, and the North Mississippi Refuges Complex.

Participants battled heat, bugs, and high water for five days to complete their mission. Working in 2 or 3 person teams they cruised nearly 8,600 acres of mature forest, collecting data on more than 900 points transecting the refuge. Data collected included forest composition, regeneration, presence of cane and vines, and other structural aspects of the forest.

Without the dedication and hard work of all those involved, it would not have been possible to gather such valuable information. Through their efforts, the refuge received a professional wildlife timber cruise at a fraction of what it would have cost to hire a private firm. Staff from the North Mississippi Refuges Complex now can base forest management decisions on this newly collected data and work to improve the forest and provide better habitat for neotropical migrants and other forest species.

*Submitted by Alejandro Galvan, Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge, Boyle, Mississippi*

***Friends Group --***

### Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society outreaches to middle schools for Alligator River, Pea Island and Pocosin Lakes



Ad by Sandy Semans, Editor, Outer Banks Sentinel

Last year, the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society decided to expand its Junior Refuge Friends Club at First Flight Middle School to include Refuge Friends Clubs at Manteo, Cape Hatteras, and Columbia Middle Schools. So, this month, the Society and refuges have been busy making contacts, marketing the programs, and setting schedules of activities for the year. It promises to be a great year for involving middle school students with these refuges - providing lots of opportunities for the students to connect with nature and learn about the refuges, the resources, what we do, and why.

Recently, we were approached by Frankie Powers, son of Refuge Maintenance Mechanic Jon Powers, about purchasing an ad for the Manteo Middle School yearbook, and then discovered that Deputy Refuge Manager Scott Lanier's daughter, Shelby, was the editor for the Yearbook!

So, this time, it's Manteo Middle School that's the trend-setter! The Society is placing a yearbook ad in all the middle schools in the area. The ad for Columbia Middle School will include Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, as well as Pea Island and Alligator River.

"This ad and our interaction with these schools are great ways to show refuges are friends of the schools. It's our hope that this will encourage the students and their parents to become friends of refuges. This is just another way we can continue to connect children with nature and encourage their parents to become involved, as well, " said Manager Mike Bryant.

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

### Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. is a finalist for a PRIDE award



Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. member Carole Thomas works to help staff the Friends Group booth at the annual Kids Catch a Rainbow Fishing Derby. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

The Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. was selected as a finalist in the College/Community Project of the Year Award for community-education projects through the annual PRIDE Envi Awards. The PRIDE initiative promotes Personal Responsibility In a Desirable Environment in 38 counties in southern and eastern Kentucky. PRIDE was launched in 1997 by Congressman Hal Rogers and the late General James Bickford, the former Secretary of the Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet. Their vision was to restore the natural beauty of their native region by encouraging citizens to take responsibility for protecting their environment and by providing environmental education and resources.



Jim Glahn, President of the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. is all smiles as he visits a booth on electricity presented by the Russell County Middle School PRIDE Club at the second Annual Earth Day Celebration at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

The PRIDE Envi Awards are presented annually each year to honor the individuals and organizations excelling at pursuing the PRIDE mission. As one of three finalists, the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. was nominated for its work in

assisting the hatchery's Environmental Education/Outreach Center with thousands of visitors, especially children, each year. For example, during the 2008 Kids Catch a Rainbow Fishing Derby, the Friends Group handed out bags of ice and insulated bags to help participants catch their fish and take them home to enjoy.

Award winners will be announced November 10, 2008, at the Hal Rogers Center in Hazard, Kentucky. For more information about the PRIDE Envi Awards, please visit [www.kypride.org/envi](http://www.kypride.org/envi) or call the PRIDE office, toll free, at 888-577-4339. For more information on the Friends of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc, please visit their website at <http://www.friendsofwolfcreeknfh.com/>.

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

### **Friends of Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. obtain first corporate membership**

The Friends of Dahomey NWR, Inc., founded in 2004, has more than 40 individual and family memberships. On June 16, 2008, Monsanto Cotton Breeding in Leland, Mississippi, became the first corporate member of the Friends group. Four employees and their supervisor, Dr. Darren Jones, from the Monsanto Cotton Breeding station visited the refuge and presented a check for \$250 to the Friends group. The Monsanto station also donated Round Up® for trail maintenance. The Friends group will honor Monsanto Cotton Breeding with a plaque as the first corporate member. The plaque will hang in the refuge's headquarters.

*Submitted by Alejandro Galvan, Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge, Boyle, Mississippi*



Dr. Darrin Jones presents a check to Friends of Dahomey President Tom Wear. Front Row L - R Stella Wear, Tom Wear, Dr. Darrin Jones, Cedric Winston, Dorothy Shawhan, Barbara Pettway, and Dora Stevenson. Back Row L - R Allen Scott, Refuge Manager Alejandro Galvan, Steve Todd, and Larry Pace. Photo by Dr. Darrin Jones.

## ***Hats Off -***



Blackside dace. Projects like the Mill Branch stream restoration project in southeast Kentucky this federally-threatened species were recognized by the Soil and Water Conservation Society Merit Award. Photo by Brent Harrel.

### **Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office awarded the Soil and Water Conservation Society's National Merit Award for 2008**

At its recent annual meeting in Tuscon, Arizona, the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Board named the Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office as the recipient of SWCS' National Merit Award for 2008. The award was presented in recognition of the Kentucky Field Office's efforts to benefit soil and water conservation, particularly its collaborative work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Farm Service Agency, and private landowners across Kentucky to address resource problems that threaten federally-listed species and aquatic biodiversity.



In recent years, the Kentucky Field Office has successfully partnered with these agencies and numerous landowners on a wide array of projects, including prairie restorations and stream bank stabilization projects using cedar tree revetments and other bio-engineering techniques, fish passage projects, and stream channel, wetland, and bottomland hardwood restoration projects. In most cases, the Kentucky Field Office also provides partial funding for project implementation through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and other funding sources.

A couple of recent conservation projects include a full-scale stream restoration project on Mill Branch in southeast Kentucky to benefit the federally-threatened blackside dace and the development of Endangered Species Act consultation procedures for NRCS streamlining the project development and implementation process for landowners.

*Submitted by Carrie Lona, Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office, Frankfort, Kentucky*

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

**Local youths spend summer working at Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery -- more photos**



Danielle helps with fish health inspection. Fish Biologists from the Warm Springs Fish Health Center perform an annual fish health inspection at the hatchery. YCC enrollees had the opportunity to work alongside Fish Biologist Norm Heil and assist with this year's inspection. Photo by Andrew Currie.



Kayla picks up dead fish. Photo by Andrew Currie

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**Southeast Region Spill Response Strike Team responds to Louisiana oil spill -- more photos**



A member of the Environmental Safety and Health (ES&H) company sets up a propane-powered cannon to scare birds away from oiled areas along the Mississippi River bank. Sunday, July 27, 2008. Photo by U.S. Coast Guard photo/Petty Officer 3rd Class Jaclyn Young.



Peter Tuttle, Contaminants Specialist, Daphne, Alabama, (l) Bill Starkel ( r), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Regional Contaminants Coordinator, based out of Atlanta, searches for six oiled ducks reported in the marshes between the Mississippi River and its levy near Belle Chasse, Louisiana, at river mile marker 75. Photo by Tom MacKenzie

### The Big Sit: A tailgate party for birders on two North Carolina national wildlife refuges!-- more photos



On the Alligator River Big Sit birds aren't the only wildlife seen! This bear wandered right by the viewing platform during the 2007 Big Sit. Photo by Bucket Taylor.



The 2007 Big Sit began at sunrise on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Bucket Taylor.

### All in a week's work...with turtles, that is -- more photos



Melissa Birbi holding the lone Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, caught aboard the RV Georgia Bulldog. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Photo.



Melissa Birbi applying a flipper tag to a loggerhead sea turtle. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Photo.



Melissa Birbi drawing blood from one of the loggerhead sea turtles. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Photo.

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**Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Helps school system secure grant for Fishing in the Schools Program -- more photos**



Physical Education teachers representing various elementary schools from the Russell County, Kentucky school district work with George Smith, president for the Louisville, Kentucky chapter of Trout Unlimited, to practice their fly casting techniques. Photo by Amanda Patrick.



Tina Fletcher, the Physical Education teacher at Union Chapel Elementary in Jamestown, Kentucky, is all smiles as she practices casting her fly rod. Photo by Amanda Patrick.

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**Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge connects people with nature -- more photos**



Refuge staff banded wood ducks during the Refuge Discovery Series. Photo by Joan Stevens.



The collection of mussels found during the Refuge Discovery Series. Photo by Joan Stevens.

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

### **No child left inside!**



Nathanael Brinkman and Monikalyn Gay saw the photographic potential of these pineland hibiscus. Photo by Pam Darty.

The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge wants no child left inside! To make that possible, refuge staff and their Friends group put a camera in childrens' hands and went outside to chase bugs, shoot bats, and snap birds.

Kids were invited to join the Refuge Ranger Pam Darty for a day in the woods near the River Trail for Kids with Cameras Day Camp. Each child was given a camera with encouragement to capture wildlife and their habitats on film. All this was to reconnect kids to the outdoors, to recharge their imagination, to focus their attention, and to fill their nostrils with the smell of the swamp, flowers, and the Suwannee River.

The 2008 Youth Conservation Corps Ashley Long, Cote Stewart, and Truitt Renaud stopped their normal work routine to help with the day camp events. Friends of the Lower Suwannee donated cameras for each child, developed the photos, and provided lunch, so that students from third to twelfth grades could learn about bats, cicadas, ladybugs, and other pollinators. All the while, the giggling, active kids were snapping pictures of bugs and spider webs they had feared before.

Returning home with refuge posters, stickers, and stories of the biggest spider webs ever seen, the young photographers left asking, "Can we do this again next summer?"



Cason Smith didn't slow down all day - until this moment. Photo by Pam Darty.

*Submitted by Pam Darty, Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys Refuges, Chiefland, Florida*

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## ***Wage Grade Profile --***

## Elvis (Billy) Gillespie of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge



Billy is just in from working on the back-hoe. Photo by Andrea Dunstan

Officially his job at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is Engineering Equipment Operator, but Billy Gillespie does many things. Second to operating those big machines, he likes carpentry work. Both skills were used during two favorite projects. Billy is proud of the work he and other staff members accomplished when they installed a new water control structure in Green Tree Reservoir Number 4 in the 1990's and the huge 150 foot by 50 foot equipment shed they completed a few years ago.

Billy's love of construction also is evident off the job. On weekends and after hours, he has built five houses; three entirely by himself! In fact, when asked what he would be doing if not working at Noxubee, he said, "I would probably be in construction." He's not all work though; he is an avid deer hunter and fisherman.

Starting at Noxubee Refuge a year out of Moor High School, Crawford, Mississippi, as a laborer, Billy moved up through the ranks as his knowledge and expertise grew during more than 30 years of employment. He learned on the job. Retired Noxubee employee Curtis Smith taught him to operate big equipment.

His outstanding work was recognized in 1998 when he was presented the Regional Director's Honor Award for Outstanding Performance in Atlanta. While he has received many monetary awards, Billy is most proud of that recognition. While nominating Billy, former Noxubee Manager Jim Tisdale said, "Elvis Gillespie is one of the more talented employees I have ever worked with during my career on five refuges."

Billy is a nickname given him by an uncle long before he can remember exactly why. It has nothing to do with his real name which is Elvis. His grandmother named him after TheElvis who was most popular when Billy was born. Can he sing? He laughingly said, "NO!"

Billy and his wife, Faye, have two children, Shymika and Crista. They also have two grandchildren.

When you see someone operating big equipment at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, wave to Billy Gillespie; he is one of our best.

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