



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

Southeastern Currents

June 2009 Newsletter

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Wolf Creek NFW Visitor/
Environmental Education Center.
Photo by Amanda Patrick.

What are sustainable buildings? What is LEED? What's happening in the Southeast?

Sustainability is an integrated, synergistic approach that considers all phases of a facility's life-cycle to avoid depletion of energy, water, and raw materials. A building also is sustainable if its facilities and infrastructure do not cause any environmental degradation. In addition, its living and working environments are comfortable, safe, and productive. Sustainable buildings incorporate the largest number of "green" building components and construction practices into construction projects and implement as many "green" building operation and maintenance requirements as possible after construction.

The Service assesses and certifies construction projects using the U.S. Green Buildings Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. There are four LEED levels increasing in order of sustainability: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. The Service is designing all buildings costing more than two million dollars to be at least LEED Certified, or higher.

Wolf Creek Fish Hatchery's Visitor/Environmental Education Center, awarded the Environmental Leadership Award as Hatchery of the Year in 2008, is an example of a new building including several sustainable design features. Perhaps one of the more visual and educational features of the Center is the use of low-flow plumbing fixtures and waterless urinals and the storage and reuse of rain and gray water for irrigation. Sited just below the Wolf Creek Dam that retains over six million acre-feet of water, this conservation feature reminds visitors how valuable water is.

Even when rebuilding after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma the Southeast Region incorporated Green elements into the construction projects at Southwest Louisiana NWR and Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, both of which were nominated for Environmental Leadership awards. The new Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR Office and Visitor Center is LEED Certifiable achieving a total of 26 points on the LEED Project Checklist. Specific features of this design included the following:

- Site Orientation and Stormwater Management designs to minimize land impacts;
- Building Materials were selected that were low VOC-emitting components such as paints, carpets, sealants, and composite wood. (Note: Volatile organic compounds or VOCs are organic chemical compounds that have high enough vapor pressures under normal conditions to significantly vaporize and enter the atmosphere.); and,
- Plumbing and mechanical systems designs were incorporated for building demands 20 percent lower than other conventional buildings and were CFC-free. (Note: Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC): a class of chemical compounds that deplete ozone.).



Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR
Office and Visitor Center, Photo
by Lloyd Culp.

In the Southeast Region, the Service currently has four office and visitor center facilities in various stages of planning and design that will be LEED Certified: Mammoth Spring NFH, Alligator River NWR, Tennessee NWR, and Vieques NWR. In addition we have several smaller administrative office facilities in the planning stage that will be built to LEED standards including offices at Wapanocca NWR, Bald Knob NWR, Big Lake NWR, Yazoo NWR, Panther Swamp NWR, and Private John Allen NFH. The most visible sustainable elements planned for these buildings include renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and geothermal; and rainwater collection and re-use. These "Green" features will certainly add to the environmental education experience for our visitors.

Submitted by Teresa McKittrick, Engineering, Atlanta, Georgia

Behind the Scenes--



Eliza Ford with her art teacher Tracey Evans. Photo by Bob Ford.

Eliza Ford takes third place in Tennessee's Junior Duck Stamp contest

Eliza Ford received third place in the Tennessee Junior Duck Stamp contest for her age group, fourth through sixth grade. Eliza is the daughter of Bob Ford, the region's coordinator for wildlife's adaptation to climate change and regional science priorities.

"Eliza always had a strong interest and talent for art, and often sketches out cartoons or scenes around her," Bob says. "She chose to draw a Harlequin duck, a rare visitor to Tennessee or the Southeast; but, as Eliza says, 'pretty and very cool to draw'."

Her art teacher and sponsor is Mr. Tracey Evans, part of her school system. The awards ceremony was held at Grassmere Park in Nashville on May 9. The Tennessee Junior Duck Stamp contest is coordinated by Joan Stevens at the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, and was started in 1995.

Submitted by Bob Ford, Migratory Birds, Memphis, Tennessee



Eliza's artwork, a Harlequin duck.

Bragging Rights --



Visitors stop by to pickup free tree seedlings provided by the Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc., at the hatchery's

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery works with local government to declare April National Environmental Education Month

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and the Russell County Soil Conservation District worked with Russell County Judge-Executive Mickey Garner to sign a proclamation declaring April to be National Environmental Education Month in the County. The proclamation, provided through the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), was signed into effect last month.

Locally, the hatchery sponsored two earth friendly events, including a program on energy efficiency held

on Tuesday, April 21, 2009 and its annual Earth Day Celebration on April 25, 2009.

Designed for anyone looking to learn more about energy conservation measures, the energy efficiency program was free to the public and provided attendees with excellent information on ways to help reduce their electricity usage and to help better inform the public on what East Kentucky Power Cooperative and South Kentucky Rural Electric Cooperative are doing to help conserve and improve overall energy efficiency.

The hatchery also held its annual Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 25, 2009. The celebration offered a myriad of activities, ranging from booths providing great ways to get better connected with the outdoors, guided hikes, interactive presentations, and a book signing. More than 490 people attended. The Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc, an annual partner in the event, provided free tree seedlings as part of the celebration, and the event's other co-sponsor and planning partner, the Russell County Soil Conservation District, also handed out free birdhouses and provided information.



Jennifer Hardwick, district operations, Russell County Soil Conservation District, Wolf Creek Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick, and Wolf Creek Project Leader James Gray stand behind Russell County, KY, Judge-Executive Mickey Garner as Garner signs the proclamation into effect. Photo by John Thompson, The Russell Register.

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



Wolf Creek Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick (L) and Kentucky Division for Air Quality Environmental Education Specialist and Kentucky Association for Environmental Education President, Elizabeth Robb Schmitz (R), help lead discussion among the participants. Photo by Katrina Holt.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery broadens grassroots effort to connect kids with nature

In order to firmly establish a grassroots initiative to educate people on the health benefits of getting children outdoors, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosted a meeting for representatives from around the state. Individuals from 15 different organizations and agencies, including the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education, Kentucky State Parks, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Kentucky Department for Public Health, the Kentucky Hunter Education Association and the Lake Cumberland Area Health Development District, attended the forum.

Plans are now underway to utilize the momentum and interest of others, aided by Wolf Creek's first ever town hall forum back in August 2008, to help encourage and spread the effort across the state. Current plans include working with the Kentucky Department of Public Health to network with such organizations as the Kentucky Department of Parks, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, and local health department districts to design a network of cooperating organizations and agencies, working together to educate and promote the natural connection of helping children to get outdoors.



The group talks about plans for the effort and how a model might be created across the state. Photo by Katrina Holt.

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



The low flying helicopter and an airboat trains emergency responders to use helicopter and boats to immobilize and capture a duck decoy, simulating an oiled bird. Photo by Charlie Hebert.

Catch and release... after cleaning -- Service trains other agencies in innovative helicopter use

This mission seems pretty simple. Catch birds that have gotten their feathers coated in an oil spill. I mean, really. This can't be that difficult, being covered with oil and all, right? Well, it turns out to be a bit more complicated. First, you've got to find them, then; you have to get them to hold still. Then you have to catch them, and then clean them up. And, don't hurt them in the process.

Picture this: An oil spill has hit the Mississippi river. Hundreds, probably thousands of wading birds, ducks, coots, herons foraging for food along the bank of the mighty Mississippi are coated with oil. Within hours the oil, starting as a number six bunker oil that can float on fresh water, but can also sink and attach itself to rocks and coat the tidal lands.

Traditional capture methods prove far less than successful. Long pole catch nets can't catch the birds because they can still fly. Sickened, probably, but well-capable of flight. Then the oil starts to harden, like asphalt. The crusting, blackened birds start to slow down, giving rescuers a chance to catch, clean, rehabilitate, and release them. But even coated and crusted, they still can resist capture.

Enter Buddy Goatcher, veteran of the Exxon Valdez clean-up, and the spill from Barge 932 in New Orleans which shut the Mighty Mississippi River down for several days, who tries a novel technique. Why not use the strong downdraft created by helicopter rotor wash to pin the oiled birds to the river to immobilize them for pickup by alerted rescue boats?

"Using choppers for locating oiled birds is standard practice," said Goatcher. "But to use them as a capture tool was kind of new."

Goatcher found that by using the superior observation platform of the agile helicopters, he could identify, isolate, and triage the birds that needed help the most.

"Spotting an oiled bird requires a lot of patience, and a steady pilot, to hover on a highly consistent basis," said Goatcher. "We have captured quite a few using this technique and now want to share this capability with our fellow agencies."

Now, fast-forward to the present, when agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services showed interest in learning more about oil spill response and wildlife capture. They were especially interested in learning more about using helicopters as a proactive recovery tool.

Ten state directors and another 10 supervisory wildlife biologists of USDA Wildlife Services attended training in Lafayette, La., to learn more about oil spill responses in the special HAZWOPER (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) course taught by the Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several contributing agencies. A total of about 50 agency representatives from USDA Wildlife Services, the Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service emergency responders from most of Louisiana's gulf coast national wildlife refuges gathered to attend the training from April 19-24, 2009. Some took eight-hour refresher courses, others stayed for the full 40 hour course.

Topics included oil and chemical spill response, wildlife capture equipment and techniques, and the Incident Command System. Wildlife Services also demonstrated some pretty cool equipment, like soft traps capable of catching wading birds without damaging their fragile legs, and a capture net gun system that uses a single .308 caliber blank round to launch large nets – handy tools in an oil spill response scenario. Veteran responders from Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, and the Barge 932 oil spill in New Orleans conducted the training.



Real news media doing real news interviews with Tom Mackenzie, about the training. Photo by Charlie Hebert.

"This was a fantastic opportunity to expand on our successes in oil spill response, and proved highly effective in dramatically increasing the capture rates for oiled and injured wildlife during recent oil spills," said Jason Suckow, USDA Wisconsin state director of Wildlife Services. "Our expertise in wildlife capture can be a very useful asset in an oil spill response, and now we are getting top-of-the-line training on the emergency responder side -- a melding of two great capabilities."

Only recently has the concept of using USDA's Wildlife Services technicians in oil spill response blossomed in the Southeast. But, it has already proven an effective way to capture those elusive oiled birds, slick snakes, and greased alligators. Oh yeah, now that you've got the birds down, try to catch an oil-slicked alligator. Don't try this at home folks, save it for the pros.

The final exercise of a week-long HAZWOPER (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) training for wildlife professionals offered a unique and innovative effort to rescue oiled birds, federal response officials using a helicopter and boats to train together to identify, detain, and rescue simulated oiled wildlife at Henderson Lake, near Lafayette, La. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Tom MacKenzie, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia



The pups (two male; one female) get a quick health check and are implanted with a small transmitter. Photo by Ryan Nordsvén.

Alligator River Refuge welcomes first red wolf litter for 2009

In red wolf terms, spring came in late April when the first 2009 litter was discovered by refuge biologists Chris Lucash, Michael Morse, and Ryan Nordsvén. The Milltail Pack, established early in the recovery program on a refuge farming unit, welcomed a litter of one female and two male pups. Currently the pack has seven wolves; three were born last season. The 2009 pups were found in a bowl-shaped den under a fallen tree and appeared to be in good health.

To date, 11 litters and a total of 40 pups have been located in the recovery area in eastern North Carolina.

"There's a chance we have more pups out there, and there's always a slim chance there are wolves out there that we have not discovered," Acting Team Leader Art Beyer said.

Each spring, red wolf dens are located so the litters can be processed. This involves recording the sex of the pup, drawing a small blood sample for DNA analysis, and implanting a tiny tracking device. The processing is done primarily to identify these wolves later in life.

In general, pups are born annually after a 63-day gestation period. Red wolves have been living on the Albemarle Peninsula in northeastern North Carolina for more than 21 years. This area is part of their historic home range.

Historically, the red wolf was a top predator in most of the eastern United States. Predator control programs and loss of habitat eliminated red wolf numbers until only a few survived along the border of Texas and Louisiana. U.S. Fish Wildlife Service biologists captured this small population and relocated them to the only zoo offering a haven for the canids: Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, Washington. At that point, the red wolf was declared extinct in the wild in 1980 and for the next seven years bred successfully in captivity. In 1987, four pair were transported to the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and released. These were the original founders of the world's only population of wild red wolves.

Today, approximately 15 red wolf packs live in the wild on 1.7 million acres of public and private land. A typical litter is three to five

pups. By two years of age, most pups have left their parents and siblings to find a mate and establish their own territories. Red wolves prey on raccoon, nutria, rabbits, small rodents and deer.

For more information about red wolves, please visit www.fws.gov/redwolf. The web site has information about how to register for a howling as well as a list of 40 Species Survival Plan captive facilities where red wolves can be seen. Because they are a wary animal, very few are seen in the wild. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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



Mickey Bland making first cut through the umbo of mussel shell. Photo by Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research.

Partnering for mussel conservation

Nicole Rankin visited the USDA Forest Service Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research office in Oxford, Mississippi, to receive mussel thin-sectioning and age interpretation training from Wendell Hagg and Mickey Bland. On April 14 to 6, 2009, she learned to section mussel shells using an Isomet low-speed saw, polish shell halves using a series of four sandpapers, and interpret mussel age using thin sections. The Fish Technology Center is conducting an age, growth, and validation study on two freshwater mussels, elephant ear and fat threeridge, from the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basins. To date, she has sectioned 75 fat threeridge mussel shells and 40 elephant ear mussel shells, and she will continue sectioning shells

throughout the year. This project will increase our understanding of basic mussel biology.



Mickey Bland mounting mussel shell half to microscope slide with epoxy. Photo by Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research.

Submitted by Nicole Rankin, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Georgia



Ana Roman with the school children. FWS Photo.

Culebra National Wildlife Refuge's Earth Day celebration

Culebra National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) celebrated Earth Day on April 22, 2009. Ms. Maria Ayala, from the Escuelita de la Alegria, invited Ana Roman, CNWR Refuge Manager, to participate in the school's Earth Day celebration. Ms. Roman, read a Spanish translation of the book: Turtle's Way: Loggy, Greeny and Leather by Mara Uman Hixon. The kids also received sea turtle coloring pages, information, and stickers. According to Ms. Ayala, the kids were really excited about the activity, and they talked about the story and the visit for days.

Submitted by Ana Roman, Culebra National Wildlife Refuge, Culebra, Puerto Rico



Volunteer Kali Kay Parauka mans the Gulf sturgeon display. Photo by Frank Parauka.

Families enjoy Choctawhatchee Estuary Festival

On Saturday, May 2, 2009, Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and volunteers from the Panama City Ecological Services Field Office and Eglin Air Force Base participated in the second annual Choctawhatchee Estuary Family Festival held at the Rocky Bayou State Park, Niceville, Florida. The hands-on, aquatic critter tanks, along with the Gulf sturgeon display, were real kid pleasers! The weather was perfect, the State Park waived the entrance fee, and nearly 1,700 folks, a figure doubling last year's attendance, enjoyed learning about the environment.

Submitted by Frank Parauka, Panama City Ecological Services Field Office, Florida



Volunteers, Kali Kay Parauka (L) and Chloe St. Aubin (R), at the critter tank. Photo by Channing St. Aubin.



Panama City Field Office Botanist Vivian Negrón-Ortiz explains the importance of protecting habitat to a group of students. Photo by Denise Rowell.

Endangered Species Day: Highlighting the Service's mission

The forecast called for a chance of rain that day in Panama City, Florida. But, biologists with the Panama City Field Office breathed a sigh of relief when clear skies emerged long enough for them to take the students on an environmental journey. The students were seventh and eighth graders from the Mowat Middle School gifted program. They were helping the field office celebrate endangered species by participating in a true-to-life project.

With any great city comes progress, and great progress also includes protecting the environment. That's why Service biologists always strive to strike a good balance between the two. It's a lesson these gifted students would learn first-hand.

"In this scenario, the students were working for an imaginary city called, 'The City of Big Dreams,'" explained botanist Vivian Negrón-Ortiz. "The City wanted to build an outdoor amphitheater and the students had to make sure endangered species were being protected."

The participants had to look at three possible building sites, ones containing species protected under the Endangered Species Act: the gopher tortoise, the red-cockaded woodpecker, and Godfrey's butterwort. The students had to analyze each site and determine where the amphitheater should be built with minimal impacts to the species and their habitat. But, they couldn't do it with the naked eye. They employed the help of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technologies.

"Spatial technologies are showing up in more and more areas of our life. We see them in navigation units in our cars, on the news, and in driving directions on the computer," explained ecologist and GIS specialist Paul Lang. "Students today have learned to rely on and expect technology to help them make important decisions. But, we have to remember we are the decision makers and must be responsible for our decisions," said Lang.

With map in hand, the students took a close look at each proposed site. As they treaded through the grass, the kids examined each pond, burrow and wetland. They had to decide which plot would support an amphitheater....one that could co-exist with endangered species and their habitats.

"Listening to the observation and ideas posed by the students as they worked their way through the park was not only refreshing,

but reassuring that they understood we all live here and we must achieve a balance with nature,” said Patrick.

After collecting data in the muggy field, biologists and students wiped the sweat off their brows, and came indoors for the second part of their project. Now, it was time to learn another form of technology...GIS. With the assistance of Lang, the students logged on to their computers, downloaded the data they just collected with the GPS units and started to look at each alternative within the GIS.

“GIS is a tremendous tool that allows us to look at the relationship between features. Through this activity, the students gained insight into the fact that by leveraging the power of these technologies, we can make more informed decisions,” explained Lang.

After a long day in the field and in the office, the students packed it up. They had a few days to digest what they had learned. Could the “City of Big Dreams” spread its wings without harming the environment?

It’s a question the kids would research....and answer. A few days later, the students presented their findings, and came up with real-life solutions. Each solution was different, with students from the audience suggesting other alternatives. Through this project, they learned that protecting endangered species was more than just a catchy slogan. It’s a never-ending journey with more than one answer; a journey that takes a lot of hard work and perseverance.

“I learned that to accomplish conservation, one must apply multiple fields of science and observation with some logical history,” said Mowat student Alan Gorchov. “Achieving it takes thoughtful balance.”

Smart conservation is also the Service’s mission, passing the torch to young stewards of the environment.

“Children are our future! If children start learning at an early age about the importance of protecting endangered species and last remaining open spaces, they’ll be better able to become good stewards of the environment on a daily basis,” said Negron-Ortiz.



Gifted students make presentations to their classmates concerning an Endangered Species Day activity. Photo by Vivian Negron-Ortiz.

Submitted by Denise Rowell, Alabama Ecological Services Field Office, Daphne, Alabama



Annie Dziargowski (left) and Dr. Heath Rauschenberg (right) stamp passports after explaining the importance listed and candidate species play in our ecosystems. Photo by Tracy Pelicer.

Endangered Species Day highlighted at Jacksonville Zoo

In partnership with the Jacksonville Zoological Gardens and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Jacksonville, Florida, Ecological Services staff sponsored a celebration of Endangered Species Day (ESD), May 15, 2009, at the zoo.

The event highlighted federally-listed, candidate and success species found in Florida including wood storks, bald eagles, Florida panthers, manatees, eastern indigo snakes, whooping cranes, sea turtles, gopher tortoises, and alligators.

Visitors picked up customized “endangered species” passports at the entrance then moved from station to station where Service biologists answered questions, quizzed students on highlighted species facts, and “stamped” the passports.

All visitors with a stamped passport received an ESD badge and sea turtle activity tear sheet upon

exiting. There also were 100 lucky winners randomly selected for prizes chosen from a grab bag full of donated nature and conservation related books.

An estimated 2,000 visitors, including at least 1,000 school-aged children, visited the zoo during the event. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Chuck Underwood, Jacksonville, Florida, Ecological Services Field Office

Satellite telemetry aids crested caracara recovery efforts

A unique study is uses solar-powered, satellite transmitter backpacks on crested caracaras to help gather data that could help this imperiled species survive in Florida's rapidly changing landscape.

"One adult bird was captured and fitted with a transmitter on April 18th," said Steve Schubert, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist working on the project. "We're hoping to catch more adults and fit them with transmitters."

The Service, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and its contractor Eagle Environmental, Inc. are partnering on this project, which utilizes tracking data from Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites to evaluate the movements of caracaras before and after land conversion associated with the upcoming construction of the Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area (STA).

The first satellite telemetry data were recently received.

"Given the anticipated scope of this work, and its crucial nature in the long term conservation and management of this threatened species, I was thrilled at the first batch of data we received," said James Dwyer, a researcher and Ph.D. student from Virginia Tech University. "The instrumentation inside these miniature backpacks record location data accurate to within 10 meters and transmits it to orbiting satellites, which then relay it to us via on-line downloads."

Using this system, researchers can identify extremely precise home ranges, night roosts, nest locations, and daily and seasonal movements, and compare ecological parameters before and after landscape conversion, or between converted and unconverted territories. "In this particular project, we are gathering data before and after a major landscape conversion being implemented as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan," Dwyer added.

Near Lake Okeechobee, Lakeside Ranch is a 2,600-acre parcel that was once used as a cattle ranch, sod farm and sugar cane field. The District purchased it several years ago and plans to build an STA there that will improve the lake's water quality by removing phosphorus and other nutrients. The Service consulted with the District on this construction project and recommended that they monitor caracaras in the area to see how they would be affected. The SFWMD agreed and hired Dwyer's group lead by Dr. Joan Morrison – a researcher with 17 years of caracara experience. "We suggested this monitoring because we weren't sure how much loss of foraging habitat the birds could absorb," said Schubert.

Bob Pace, a fish and wildlife biologist with the Service, believes this initiative is a good example of how the South Florida Ecological Services Office is already using a new strategy called strategic habitat conservation (SHC). "Key elements of SHC are biological planning and working with our partners to design a conservation strategy and then following up on that strategy to ensure we achieve our objective. Thanks to Steve Schubert's efforts, we're doing that on this project."



James Dwyer (left) and Steve Schubert check a caracara's transmitter before releasing the bird. Photo by Lisa Kreiger, South Florida Water Management District.

Construction on the first phase of the Lakeside Ranch STA is scheduled to begin this summer. This construction project is part of a continuing effort to improve water quality in Lake Okeechobee and America's Everglades by the SFWMD to transform the Lakeside Ranch into a wetland that will clean stormwater runoff before it reaches the lake.

"A cleaner lake provides many benefits to the Everglades, Florida's natural resources and the state's economy, which depends on a healthy environment," said SFWMD Governing Board Chair Eric Buermann.

Submitted by Ken Warren, South Florida Ecological Services Field Office, Vero Beach, Florida



George Constantino and others cut the ribbon the refuge's Environmental Education and Concession Center Dedication. Photo by Blaine Eckberg.

Visitors flock to Okefenokee for Earth Day and National Wildlife Week celebration

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge celebrated Earth Day and National Wildlife Week with a variety of activities for all ages on Saturday, April 18, 2009. This year's theme was "Let's Go Outside to Okefenokee" to encourage kids and their families to get outdoors and to visit the refuge.

The celebration actually started in March with the Earth Day Grocery Bag Art Project for which more than 700 elementary students from Charlton County schools created art on grocery bags that were handed out to customers at two local food stores starting April 18. These students then received free wristbands that say "Let's Go Outside- Okefenokee NWR." Whenever a student wears a wristband to the refuge this year, they will receive a free gift.

Saturday's activities started with a Roadside Cleanup along the Okefenokee Parkway leading to the refuge. Thirty-nine bags of trash were collected. For bicycle riders who wanted a challenge, a 41-mile Fitness Ride from the nearby town of Folkston to the refuge and back was offered.

The main event of the day was the Discover Okefenokee bicycle tour in which visitors were encouraged to ride or carpool along the refuge's scenic nine-mile Swamp Island Drive. Along the drive they could visit 14 stations featuring exhibits and demonstrations about wildlife, plants, firefighting, photography, fishing, bike safety, recycling, electricity conservation, nature crafts, and more. All people who had their passports stamped after visiting each booth received a free reusable tote bag featuring the event's theme and the art project's winning artwork.

Many people also attended the event to witness the refuge's Environmental Education Classroom and Concession Center Dedication. This new building houses a classroom, a restaurant and gift shop, and restrooms. The event concluded with a Sunset Boat Tour of the Okefenokee Swamp. More than 60 people from the Fish and Wildlife Service, refuge volunteers, state agencies, and other partners worked together to make the event a great success.



Visitors learn about Okefenokee wildlife. FWS Photo.

Submitted by Blaine Eckberg, Okefenokee and Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuges, Folkston, Georgia



The Service's table at Green Fest. FWS Photo.

Green Fest

Biologists from the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center (WSFTC) and the Fort Benning Ecological Services Field Office (FBESO) participated in the first annual environmental awareness day at Columbus State University on March 26, 2009. Nicole Rankin and Bill Bouthillier from the WSFTC and Sandra Nipper of the FBES office manned a booth illustrating each station's research and regulatory programs. In addition to displaying material on endangered species, fish passage, freshwater mussel conservation, and aquatic nuisance species, the trio advised students on SCEP and STEP employment opportunities with the Service. Despite the heavy downpour of rain, 20 other organizations participated in the event, and more than 150 students learned about the Service.

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



Biologist Bill Bouthillier explaining the STEP program to several students. FWS Photo.



Service biologist Mark Cantrell shows one of the artificial shelters for chucky madtom. Photo by Gary Peeples.

Biologists turn to North Carolina pottery company to help imperiled East Tennessee fish

Biologists working to conserve the chucky madtom, an imperiled catfish known to exist only in East Tennessee's Little Chucky Creek, have turned to a novel tool to help the fish – flower pot saucers which they used to make artificial nesting habitat for the madtom. The shelters are made of two flower-pot saucers turned upside-down and glued one on top of the other. Stones are glued in the basin of the lower saucer to help hold the structure in place. The upper saucer has a hole on the edge for the fish to swim in and out, and notches for water flow. Mark Cantrell, a biologist with the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office, assembled a team of biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cookeville and Asheville Field Offices, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Conservation Fisheries, Inc. who spent two days placing the structures and searching for the madtom. So far, 70 of the structures have been set out and Cantrell plans to check them every couple of weeks.

First described as a species in 2005, only 14 specimens of the Chucky madtom have ever been found, with the most recent find coming in 2004.

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

More than 400 acres protected upstream from endangered mussel habitat

95-year old Howard McElrath and generations of his family have long enjoyed a finger of land along North Carolina's Seniard Creek, surrounded by Pisgah



Endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. Photo by Gary Peeples.

National Forest. The waters of Seniard Creek eventually flow into the Mills River, home to one of seven populations of the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. In part a reaction to the pace of mountain development, the family recently placed a conservation easement on more than 400 acres of their land in a deal fostered in part by Asheville, North Carolina, Ecological Services Field Office private

lands biologist Anita Goetz. The effort was innovative in that the land conservancy involved, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, was able to pool money from two programs, the federal Wetlands Reserve Program, and the state Clean Water Management Trust Fund, in order to conserve the tract.



Howard McElrath speaks to a reporter about the conservation easement. Photo by Gary Peeples.

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

Friends Group --

Refuge "Friends" offer grants for field trips to refuges



Cape Hatteras Secondary School students participating in the 2008/2009 Refuge Educational Grant program presented a summary of their work at a recent meeting of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Board of Directors. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

On May 18, 2009, Stanley Oliver, president of the Board of Directors for the Coastal Wildlife Society announced the availability of a new educational grants program designed to assist schools with taking classes to experience Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges. Letters were sent to teachers in local, North Carolina counties encouraging them to complete an application requesting funding for refuge trips during the 2009/2010 school year.

Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges offer schools environmental education, wildlife trails and drives, and just plain memorable outdoor experiences. Schools and other educational organizations are invited to bring classes to experience these national wildlife refuges.

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society is the non-profit support group for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges. The Society funds an educational grants program to pay for transportation and other costs associated with class field trips to Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges. This also includes an open invitation to coordinate with refuge staff to have programs in the school as well. The process is simple and has been designed to allow as many classes as possible to benefit from a refuge experience.

Grant proposals may, for example, cover expenses for a class on a field trip to one of the refuges or for a year-long project involving the refuges. Funds may be used to purchase special equipment, or to produce publications or presentations.

"We believe in experiential learning and support taking children out-of-doors," commented Society



At a recent meeting of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Board of Directors, new Board member Martha Howell was welcomed to the group. Martha will be serving as secretary for the Board. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

president Stanley Oliver. "And, we support teaching kids about these national wildlife refuges. I'd like to think that our group can play a small role in producing some managers and biologists for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service down the road! In several middle schools in Dare and Tyrrell counties, the Society has sponsored 'Junior Refuge Friends' clubs."

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

Hats Off -



Biologist Lorna Patrick (middle) and four persevering partners who helped develop a county beach lighting ordinance to benefit sea turtles, beach mice, shorebirds and other coastal wildlife. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

Panama City Ecological Services Field Office honors partners

Partners help keep our eyes on the conservation ball, and we can't do good things without them! The Panama City Ecological Services Field Office hosted its annual luncheon party on April 16, 2009, to celebrate the partners' accomplishments and recognize their commitment to conserving and protecting America's resources. Honorees worked toward conservation goals upstream in our rivers, downstream in our bays and estuaries, and watershed-wide places in between, from mussel education to living shoreline restoration, from Okaloosa darter recovery to sea turtle lighting ordinance negotiation, and from freshwater fish genetics to Gulf sturgeon conservation. Without partners, our collective accomplishments would be greatly diminished. We're grateful to

have them!



Project Leader Gail Carmody (center) laughs with school media specialist Summer Zepher (left) and attorney Delores Young (right) as they display their partner awards. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp.

Submitted by Melody Ray-Culp, Panama City Ecological Services Field Office, Florida



Refuge Manager Mike Bryant (right) presents the 2008 Refuge Volunteer of the Year to Ron Marchand. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

Alligator River Refuge Complex honors volunteers

At the annual Refuge Volunteer Awards Ceremony on Saturday afternoon, May 16, 2009, volunteers were treated to dinner, awards, and thanks for all their contributions to the Alligator and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges in Dare County, North Carolina.

Among the numerous award presentations, Refuge Manager Mike Bryant recognized Ron Marchand as the 2008 Volunteer of the Year. On Sundays, Marchand conducts early morning Pea Island turtle patrols, opens the Pea Island Visitor Center and leads a bird walk. Marchand, an accomplished photographer, also assists the refuge with maintenance and repairs, photography, "turtle watch", and other needs as they arise. Marchand has contributed 1,662 volunteer hours to Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Bryant sang praises for the accomplishments of all the volunteers at the refuge complex.

"I appreciate all that you do. Without you, we would not have the refuges in the condition they're in, give the programs we give, manage the populations we manage, or present the image we present. You provide the energy, enthusiasm, and time that make it all work. You have hearts for refuges, and refuges need you."

As a part of the celebration, Bryant updated the group on refuge projects and accomplishments. "We've had good years on both Alligator River and Pea Island refuges. Water control in Pea Island brought more wintering waterfowl. When drained this spring, impoundment mud flats were used by shorebirds."

And, Bryant is excited about the future. "Some 18 years ago, land on Roanoke Island was purchased for a visitor center for both refuges and office space for staff. Recovery funding of \$6.65 million is now in hand to build that center. And six refuges under my management will receive \$540,000 for a variety of projects, including creating rock fords across streams and restoring saturated soil hydrology."

Volunteers receive certificates when 100 hours of donated time is accumulated and then pins for 250, 500 1,000, 1,500, 3,000 and 7,500 hours of accumulated volunteer service in the national refuge system. Awards are for cumulative hours, so some volunteers have been accumulating hours for more than 25 years.

Receiving certificates for reaching over 100 hours of volunteer time in 2008 were Bill Vancura, Rich Griffiths, Georgia Griffiths, Elizabeth Morey, Carol Bauer, Heather Demerest and Glenn Moore.

Receiving a 250-hour pin were Waverly Reibel, Gary Frable, Dian Frable, Hollie Warren, Karen Calloway, James Wilson, John Koltz, Carol Thompson, Russell Thompson and Ann Moore.

Pins for 500 hours of volunteer time were earned by Ron Scovell, Jay Ross, Lisa Borel, Diane Stone, Gene Stone, Lee Hamm, Pat New, Ward New, Calvin Wilson and Jess Sutt. Receiving pins for 250 and 500 hours were Janice Lane and Emily Martin.

Volunteers Laura Gilson, William Thompson, Bill Voegtli and Ken Wynne have all accumulated over 1,000 hours of volunteer time with the national refuge system

In the 1,500-hour volunteer category were Ron Marchand, the refuge volunteer of the year, and Neal Moore.

Pat Moore stood with over 3,000 donated hours to the refuge system and its programs.

At this awards dinner, Warren Davis was acknowledged for 7,500 hours of volunteer service to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Ken Wynne was recognized as having the highest sales day at the Pea Island Visitor Center.



Refuge Volunteer Ken Wynne accepts award for the 2008 Highest Sales Day in the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center gift shop operated by the refuge support group- the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society. Manager Mike Bryant (right) presented the award. Photo by Bonnie Strawser.

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



Volunteers enjoy an airboat ride.
Photo by Chuck Ryan.

Special award for BIG volunteers at A.R.M. Loxahatchee Refuge

BIG does not mean size – it is representative of the many hours these volunteers contributed. A number of volunteers at Loxahatchee NWR have contributed More than 750 volunteer hours. A couple had 5,000 hours or more!

What do you give to a person who has given so much? That was the question that Rolf Olson, deputy project leader, at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, posed. So, what do you give a person like that? How about a private airboat ride into the interior of the Everglades, one of the most beautiful spots on earth? This area is normally restricted to exotic plant removal workers and water quality biologists, no public allowed. Over the course of two weeks, 24 volunteers who had served 750 hours or more were treated to a one-hour tour of the Everglades at Loxahatchee with their own expert guide. Angie Debre, Jeremy Conrad, and Marcie Dixon, all staff biologists at the refuge, volunteered to be their pilots and guides.

For many of the volunteers this was the first time they had been into the interior of the refuge where they have worked so hard. On these trips, they saw bird rookeries and tree islands, gator nests, and “lots and lots” of alligators. One boat of volunteers even saw a group of about 10 alligators feasting on a large school of fish, diving and grabbing them as they swam by, a very uncommon event.

As Karen Kleiler, one of the volunteers, said, “Our lovely refuge is truly beautiful and special. I really enjoyed seeing the birds nesting out in the interior.”

Now the push is on to get all the volunteers out into the interior. And, yes, the ones who just received the award want to go out again too. Maybe next year!

The volunteers who make the operation of Loxahatchee possible are proudly represented by the following people with 750 hours of volunteer time or more:

Mildred Hinkle, Jean Poleschuck, Hal Albertson, Harvey Eisen, Steve Horowitz, Beth Morris, Howard Averbach, David Lurie, Jean Cerier, Pearl Goldsmith, Jeff Kramer, Karen Kleiler, Doris Ratiner, Howard Crosby, Monroe Messinger, Ann Swanson, Ruth Levow, Frank Bodofsky, Sid Rotter, Jay Brenner, Alan Morse, Elinor Williams, and Judy Bica. Volunteers with 750 hours or more who were unable to attend were Hal Wiedermann, Mitch Rosenheim, Cynthia Plockelman, Pat Canning, Harvey Epstein, Kathy Walters, Clyde Burnett, and Fred Test.



Some of the volunteers. Photo by Chuck Ryan.

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

I Gave '8' --



Judy Toppins discusses fish habitat at her BIT program. Credit: Carolyn Griffin, Mt. Bethel Elementary School

Fourth grade class dives into BIT!

On Thursday, May 7, 2009, we invited my daughter's (Melissa Mesnick's) fourth grade class to do what we had always forbidden our young guests to do: venture into our creek. Judy Toppins, the Service's Fisheries Outreach Coordinator, created the Biologist in Training program (BIT) and presented it to Mrs. Griffin's class of 27 students and three teachers. Debbie Young, the Southeast Region's Web Master, Sharon Fuller, Education Specialist, and four parents were there to help. Judy's fearless four-year-old son, Eli, was a constant inspiration to the older kids.

acted out different parts of



Melissa Mesnick, left, and Patricia Wetherly test the creek water. Credit: Carolyn Griffin, Mt. Bethel Elementary School

First, Judy handed out the colorful BIT booklets. Then, she instructed them to build a human fish. The class discussed everything necessary for survival and different habitats for different fish. They played environmental games and they checked out our creek. Judy explained that water "like orange juice" is probably not great for fish. After lunch, they tested our creek water, which fortunately, tested out very clean. It was everything we could do to hold them back from the water. With nets and bottles, they forged into the swollen creek, finding crane fly larvae, damsel fly larvae, aquatic worms and a dragonfly casing.

Finally, they were dragged from the creek and Judy awarded the class their BIT certificates and badges. Mrs. Griffin said it best, "Thanks for an amazing, wet-a-licious, exciting, quite muddy, energetic, just a bit crittery, oh-so-interesting, cool, fun, crème de la crème of all field trips, Biologist in Training!"



The students work with a seine, dip nets and sample bottles, discovering various species in the creek. Credit: Carolyn Griffin, Mt. Bethel Elementary School

Submitted by Ellen Marcus Mesnick, External Affairs, Atlanta, Georgia



Which is more important-- teaching a good conservation message or being a hero to your granddaughter? Both were accomplished. FWS Photo.

Jesse Williams speaks at his grand-daughter's school's Earth Day celebration

Jesse Williams, a long-time engineering equipment operator for Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, is a real pushover for his only granddaughter, Sarah. When Sarah volunteered her "Papa" to bring a wildlife exhibit to her school's Earth Day celebration, Jesse scrambled to put together something that would make her proud.

While he was going refuge to refuge in eastern North Carolina looking for ideas and things to take along, he bumped into Abbey Reibel and Cindy Heffley, Visitor Services Specialists at Pea Island. And, he probably got more stuff than he wanted!! Adding posters, handouts, and information boards to his already-collected stash of wildlife, mounts, and pelts, Jesse was ready.

Jesse did, in fact, make Sarah proud. At the same time, he made the rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service in eastern North Carolina proud, as well. Jesse enthusiastically talked about wildlife in eastern North Carolina and his more than 30

years of working on national wildlife refuges. He showed the children an otter, a bear, an owl, and all kinds of pelts, and parts, and pieces of wildlife. He talked about the value of refuges and the habitat they provide, and he encouraged the children to be good stewards. Jesse taught more than 500 students from Old Richmond Elementary School in Tobaccoville, North Carolina, about wildlife and the refuges near where they live. What a way to give eight!

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

Second-graders tour St. Andrew State Park

Forty second-grade students toured St. Andrew State Park in Panama City, Florida, during a class field trip with Panama City Ecological Services Field Office staff. The students learned how animals developed strategies for using the environment they inhabit in to their advantage. We began by exploring the visitor center ecosystem displays to see how animals can blend in with their environment to hide from danger or hunt for food. After this brief introduction, we toured the coastal strand and associated wetland areas where we observed the habits of nesting sea turtles, wading birds, schooling fishes, whitetail deer, rabbits, and even a large, female American alligator who was sunning on the trail. The students' enthusiastic questions demonstrated they enjoyed and would remember the experience.



Jon Hemming teaches students about wildlife. Photo by Jenny Lewis.

Submitted by Jon Hemming, Panama City Ecological Services Field Office, Panama City, Florida



Wildlife Biologist Becky Rosamond educates fifth graders about the Louisiana black bear. Photo by Bobbie Willis.

North Mississippi Refuges Complex celebrates Earth Day at area school

Staff members from the North Mississippi Refuges Complex participated in Earth Day celebrations at Grenada Elementary School. Wildlife Biologist Becky Rosamond presented information on the endangered Louisiana black bear to more than 300 fifth graders at an Earth Day Conservation Field Day on Friday, April 17. Students were able to feel a bear pelt and get a close look at a bear skull and tracks.

On Wednesday, April 22, Administrative Officer Bobbie Willis and Becky Rosamond visited a kindergarten class and a first grade class at Grenada Lower Elementary School. They introduced students to the National Wildlife Refuge System, spoke about the importance of wildlife habitat, and also discussed what the students could do to help the environment.



Administrative Officer Bobbie Willis talks to students about what they can do to help the environment. Photo by Becky Rosamond.

Submitted by Becky Rosamond, North Mississippi Refuges Complex, Grenada, Mississippi



The girls share stories about life on a farm. Photo by Marlowe Brownlow.

Girl Scout troops enjoy the outdoors at a Mississippi park

In December 2008 and February 2009, Administrative Officer Bobbie Willis and Wildlife Biologist Becky Rosamond conducted several hikes with Girl Scout troops in Grenada, Mississippi. The girls visited t Jim Cann Camp Cedar Point .in Grenada. In addition to hiking in the woods, the girls asked interesting questions about the work of the North Mississippi Refuges Complex. There were 20 kids, aged 4 to 10, at each event. The girls also enthusiastically shared stories about the animals being raised on their farms, and what each girl wanted to do when she grew up.

Submitted by Bobbie Willis, North Mississippi Refuges Complex, Grenada, Mississippi



Bobbie Willis, answers questions about the work of the North Mississippi Refuges Complex. Photo by Marlowe Brownlow.

A Suwannee River canoe trip

On March 30, 2009, I accompanied eight boy scouts and three leaders on a portion of a four-day, 50-mile canoe trip on the Suwannee River in Florida. The canoe trip is one of the preparatory canoe trips that will culminate in a trip with the scouts to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in early August this year. The river water level was low during the trip, but heavy rains that began the last night triggered dangerous flooding just a few days later.

Submitted by Joe Reinman, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Florida

Photo Album --

Catch and release... after cleaning -- Service trains other agencies in innovative helicopter use -- more photos



Students view a net launcher during HAZWOPER training in Lafayette, La. Photo by Charlie Hebert.



Net gun launches a 30-by-30-foot net using a single .308 caliber blank round. Photo by Charlie Hebert.



L to R: Buddy Goatcher, contaminants specialist, USFWS, Lafayette Ecological Services Office, La. ; Dwight LeBlanc, Louisiana Wildlife Services state director; Jason Suckow, Wisconsin state director, Wildlife Services, provide instruction on the use of propane cannons during oil spill dispersal and hazing activities. Photo by Charlie Hebert.



Richard Blackburn, Watercraft Safety Coordinator, USFWS Southeast Region, gives a safety briefing prior to watercraft and helicopter exercise. Photo by Tom MacKenzie.



HAZWOPER class learns how the helicopters and boats operate in tandem to safely capture wildlife, using duck and goose decoys as training aids. Photo by Charlie Hebert.

Alligator River Refuge welcomes first red wolf litter for 2009 -- more photos



Red wolf pups outside their den site. Photo by Ryan Nordsven.



Red Wolf Biologist Michael Morse locates den of Miltail pack under a fallen tree. Photo by Ryan Nordsvan.

Endangered Species Day highlighted at Jacksonville Zoo -- more photos



Mike Jennings (left) and Erin Gawera (right), biologists from the Jacksonville, FL Ecological Services Office, pass out Endangered Species Day passports and prizes near the entrance of the Jacksonville Zoological Gardens. Photo by Tracy Pellicer.



Jim Valade, a biologist from the Jacksonville, FL Ecological Services Office, answers questions and provides interesting facts about the Florida manatee to visitors at the Jacksonville Zoological gardens. Photo by Tracy Pellicer.



Bill Brooks passes out Endangered Species Day passports at the American wood stork station inside the Jacksonville Zoological Gardens. Photo by Tracy Pellicer.



Jane Monaghan, a biologist from the Jacksonville, FL Ecological Services Office, talks with student visitors at the Jacksonville Zoological gardens about America's largest bird, the whooping crane. Photo by Tracy Pellicer.

Visitor Services --

Regional Office Visitor Services Team has expanded



Regional Office Visitor Services Team (from l to r) Stacy Armitage, Visitor Services specialist; Paula Green, program operations specialist; Sharon Fuller, education specialist; Deborah Jerome, Visitor Services specialist and Garry Tucker, chief of Visitor Services. FWS Photo.

Meet the new staff --

Sharon Fuller

The Regional Office welcomes Sharon Fuller, education specialist, to the Visitor Services team! In 2002, Sharon began her career with the Service in the SCEP program as an undergraduate and continued on with the program through graduate school. Through her SCEP experience and full-time positions Sharon broadened her career and served in several biological and Visitor Services related positions at Bosque del Apache, A.R.M. Loxahatchee, J.N. "Ding" Darling, and most recently at Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge. She supports Refuges, Migratory Birds and External Affairs as an education/outreach liaison for the divisions. Her primary program responsibilities for Visitor Services include interpretation, special events, intranet/internet content, and mew media.

"I am ecstatic to be a part of the team and looking forward to helping the field accomplish our work,"

Sharon says.

Stacy Armitage

Stacy Armitage, Visitor Services specialist, joined the team in October 2008. Beginning in 2004, Stacy was stationed at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge as the Environmental Education Specialist. At the Arsenal, she managed the education and interpretive programs and was the team leader overseeing every aspect of Visitor Services. Prior to the Service, Stacy taught high school biology, chemistry, and physical science. Her primary program responsibilities include volunteers, friends, environmental education, and connecting people with nature.

Duties of the other members of the team

Garry Tucker, Deborah Jerome, and Paula Green also are part of the Regional Office Visitor Services team. Garry is the Chief of Visitor Services and his primary programs include Visitor Services policy, exhibits, YCC, hunting, fishing, and photography. Deborah Jerome, Visitor Service specialist, coordinates recreation fees, wilderness, signs, site planning, Visitor Services policy, and planning. Paula Green, program operations assistant, not only provides administrative support to Visitor Services, but also assists Law Enforcement, Planning and Resource Management divisions.

Submitted by Sharon Fuller, Visitor Services, Atlanta, Georgia

Wage Grade Profile --

Bob Quarles of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex



Bob Quarles. Photo by Keith Ramos.

Bob Quarles has been with the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex for 35 years. He has seen a lot of changes, including watching the Complex grow to five refuges, and the staff grow from three to 10 employees. He has worn many hats during his years of service, besides his regular duties as a boat operator and a general maintenance person. Bob took part in many projects and completed many important tasks, including his participation in the law enforcement, fire and biological programs. He currently serves as a Regional instructor for the motorboat operator and airboat courses.

Bob attended three days of law enforcement training in 1974. His efforts included: working deer hunts at Lower Suwannee and waterfowl hunts at Chassahowitzka. In addition, Bob worked on a special law enforcement task force from 1974-1985 assisting with a lead shot ingestion study, and he worked security at Merritt Island for the space shuttle lift off.

He assisted the Division of Realty with the acquisition of the Chassahowitzka, Cedar Key, Lower Suwannee, and Crystal River National Wildlife Refuges. When the Chassahowitzka Refuge Complex did not have a biologist, Bob performed the work of a biological technician surveying wading birds and waterfowl. He assisted with the trapping and banding of birds and mammals and assisted with the construction and erection of twelve osprey nesting platforms at Cedar Key.

Before Crystal River was established in 1983, Bob assisted in the development, maintenance, and enforcement of the first three manatee sanctuaries in Kings Bay in 1980. He conducted aerial manatee surveys along with bald eagle nest surveys. Over the years, Bob has rescued countless manatees and has transported them to the Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa and Sea World in Orlando for care.

Bob started his fire training in 1985 and fought fires in Colorado, California, Idaho, New Mexico, Arizona, Oregon, and Georgia. In 1986, he helped develop the plan to post the water buffer zone around Passage Key National Wildlife Refuge in Tampa Bay. Bob also helped build the pen to house the reintroduced flock of whooping cranes and has provided logistical support for this project for eight years. In addition, he received a Medal of Valor award for his work rescuing people from their flooded homes in Ozello, Florida, following the "No Name" Storm on March 13, 1993.

When Bob decides to retire, he will take a wealth of knowledge with him.

Submitted by Joyce Kleen and Keith Ramos, Chassahowitzka Refuge Complex, Crystal River, FL

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