



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

*Southeast Region***Southeastern Currents**

JUNE 2010 NEWSLETTER

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The spill on the oil spill

Breton Island Refuge Manager Jack Bohannon discusses boom deployment at the refuge with a Coast Guard Officer. Photo by Greg Thompson, USFWS.

I'm Jack Bohannon, Refuge Manager of for Delta, Breton and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuges in Southeast Louisiana. Oil operations and the challenges that go with them are the part of the job when you work on refuges along the Gulf Coast. In fact, when the news broke about the Deepwater Horizon disaster, my staff and I were dealing with a 500-barrel spill in the heart of Delta Refuge caused by a spud barge striking a 10-inch pipeline. What's happening now, however, is a whole new ball game.

With the Deepwater Horizon accident, our first thoughts were for the people lost and missing from the rig and the heartache endured by their families in this tragedy. Our second thoughts were that we knew from experience how much work was in store for those who had to deal with the spill itself. Within a matter of days, as the potential reach of the spill became more apparent, we found ourselves at the center of that workload. We've been at it full-bore ever since as part of the unified, multi-agency response to the disaster.

The hardest part of working this spill is the unknown. We don't know exactly how much oil has actually been released into the Gulf, we don't know where exactly it will go, and we don't know how much impact it will have on the resources entrusted to our care. Dealing with the unknown is probably the biggest source of fatigue, greater even than the long days of arduous work. It's just always on your mind from the minute you wake up in the morning until your head hits the pillow at night. What keeps us all going as Fish and Wildlife Service people is the depth of our commitment to the resources themselves. When you are passionate about conserving wild animals and their habitats, that's all the motivation you need to labor on in the face of this kind of adversity. The oil keeps on coming; but, we will not give up and we will not give in. There is too much at stake. The spill has occurred at a critical time for the nesting shorebirds and seabirds on Breton National Wildlife Refuge, which is composed of a chain of islands. The refuge is still recovering from the impacts of the 2005 hurricane season and other weather events, so protecting birds and their nests is mission-critical. Our primary nesting sites for brown pelicans are North Breton Island, where we've got newly hatched pelicans in 1,300 nests; and New Harbor West Island, where we have another 500 nests with juvenile birds. In addition, terns, black skimmers, and laughing gulls start nesting in May on the Refuge and continue through the summer months. Right now, we estimate that there are 28,600 nests on North Breton Island alone. A spill of 12-14 barrels in 2005 affected more than 1,000 brown pelicans, so the potential implications of the Deepwater Horizon spill are huge.

We have been working feverishly to protect these refuge islands from the oil's encroachment through the strategic placement of the most effective and available type of boom suited for this kind of offshore environment. Working with BP and the U.S. Navy, we've put a huge amount of effort into surrounding both North Breton and New Harbor West islands with thousands of feet of 26-inch boom in an attempt to create a seal that will hopefully hold back the oil even in bad weather.

Our primary job is to protect the wildlife in this catastrophe, and that requires a lot of coordination with other agencies trying to carry out their own missions. We make sure that the needs of wildlife aren't overlooked as the disaster response moves forward in highly uncertain conditions. With the number of people and amount of activity underway, we've had to close the refuge as a means of protecting the nesting birds from disturbance. Finding the balance between allowing people to get near the birds to carry out their work and ensuring that the nesting birds are not disturbed has been hard, but essential. Human disturbance of nesting pelicans, for example, will cause adult pelicans to abandon the nests for a time, which in turn allows gulls to predate the young birds left in the nest on their own.

We are trying to prepare for any eventuality, getting the cages, the transportation, and the rehabilitation resources lined up should the worst happen. We are monitoring the islands and the birds constantly, working with the State of Louisiana and others. Because we know the waters along the Gulf Coast and in the Mississippi River so well, we've had a big role to play in ensuring that other members of the joint response to the spill navigate safely as they carry out their missions, including putting the boom in place. Changes in the weather can make the job dangerous. You can head out in good weather, and find yourself returning home in bad weather. There is also ship traffic to deal with, and nothing prepares you to handle all this except experience.

When I hired on with the Fish and Wildlife Service, I thought I'd be outside every day. It became very clear in a short period of time that this wasn't the case. Right now, in this disaster, it feels good to be out there with the resource all day long. What doesn't feel good is why I'm out there. But I have to say, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else at this moment in time, and I know others on my staff feel the same way. Despite the hardship of being away from home and family for long periods of time, I know what we are doing really matters.

We are doing everything we possibly can to protect the refuges and the wildlife resources we have here. If I could have one wish, it would be that this spill and the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig had never happened. The loss of life and the potential impacts to our natural resources are things we cannot lose sight of as our work continues.

Submitted by Jack Bohannon, Southeast Louisiana Refuges, Lacombe, Louisiana

Behind the Scenes--



Hatchery workers carry fish in old milk cans. Historical Forest Service/FWS Photo

Fifth generation at Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

Rebekah Pickelsimer recently visited the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery in Suches, Georgia. She is the granddaughter of Facilities Operations Specialist Mitchell Pickelsimer. Mitch has worked at the hatchery for almost 20 years and administers the fish production and stocking program. Mitch is very dedicated to his job and loves doing it. Mitch literally grew up on the hatchery since his father, Sylvan Pickelsimer, worked for 38 years at the hatchery as a Maintenance Worker. Mitch loved coming to work with his dad as a youngster, and that is one of the reasons he wanted to work at the fish hatchery.

In the early 1940's, Hubert Pickelsimer, father of Sylvan and grandfather of Mitch, worked for the U.S. Forest Service. Chattahoochee Forest hatchery was then owned and operated by the Forest Service. Mr. Pickelsimer helped with raising and distributing fish during this time. The fish were hand-carried in old milk cans and stocked throughout North Georgia.



Mitchell Pickelsimer with his granddaughter Rebekah. Photo by Crystal Thomas, FWS.



Rebekah picks up a loose fish.
Photo by Crystal Thomas, FWS.

As you can see, this truly is a family affair that has lasted throughout five generations. Bekah already has shown true ability in picking up "loose" fish. The hatchery crew has a hard time catching that one fish that escapes out of the net, but not Bekah. She just scoops it right up and loves every minute. She may very well grow up and work on a National Fish Hatchery somewhere!

Submitted by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, Georgia

Bragging Rights --



Jerry Coleman, president, Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. and Jeff Powers, member, Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. stop for a picture during their work to hand out free tree seedlings as part of the Earth Day Celebration at the hatchery. Photo by Amanda Patrick, FWS.

Spring means National Environmental Education Month at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

From Earth Day to Arbor Day, April was jam packed with events and information designed to foster better connections between people and the environment. 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 Russell County. The proclamation, provided through the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), was signed into effect on Thursday, April 8, 2010.

Locally, the hatchery sponsored several earth friendly events in celebration of the month, including its annual Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 24, 2010. A myriad of activities were provided ranging from booths providing great ways to get better connected with the outdoors to guided hikes, wetland walks, fly-tying demonstrations, and an introduction to photography class. Earth Day was again a resounding success with more than 400 people in attendance. 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.

Other nature related events for April included partnering with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service in Russell County to plan and lead a four week We Can! Parent and Leader Training in the county. The training included curriculums from Project WET and WOW! (Wonders of Wetlands).



George Smith, member, Trout Unlimited, Louisville, Kentucky, demonstrates fly tying for an Earth Day Celebration attendee. Photo by Amanda Patrick, FWS.

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



Participants enjoy a pickup game. Photo by Amanda Patrick, FWS.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery and Russell County Cooperative Extension Service bring We Can!

With the arrival of Spring and the natural world blooming and starting anew, there's no better time to be thinking about increasing one's physical activity and getting outdoors. Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery Environmental Education/Outreach Specialist Amanda Patrick partnered with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service's Russell County Office to plan and implement a We Can! Parent

Program. We Can! which stands for Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition, is a national movement aimed at curbing childhood obesity. As part of the We Can! outreach series, program participants invest one hour each Monday over a four-week period. Throughout the class, attendees learn more about easy ways to become more active, how to incorporate better nutrition into meal planning and with the hatchery's involvement, how connecting with the outdoors can play a pivotal role. In April, the hatchery and the Cooperative Extension Service worked with several other agencies to recruit and train participants with a variety of backgrounds. Because feedback from the participants was immensely positive, additional classes are planned for the future.

To learn more about We Can!, including how you can register your site as a community site, please visit: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>

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

Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service partners for Earth Day

To celebrate Earth Day, Dan Gregg, wildlife biologist for the Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office, assisted the U.S. Forest Service with conducting the environmental education program *Kids4Trees* at Forest Middle School in Forest, Mississippi.

Dan, and several Forest Service biologists, staffed nine different stations representing subjects such as wildlife, forestry, fire, archaeology, soils, safety and general conservation. A total of about 300 second-, third- and fourth-graders rotated between stations and spent the day learning, singing, and planting trees around their school, with the help of Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl.



Mississippi school children learn about wildlife through some skin-and-skull activities with FWS biologist Dan Gregg. Photo courtesy of Melissa Kinnell, U.S. Forest Service



Hollie Conway (in red shirt on left in front of tent), two-time Olympic medalist in the high jump, and Tracy Mates, three-time Olympic Festival bronze medalist in the high hurdles, encourage the students to do their best in life and for the environment. Photo courtesy of Melissa Kinnell, U.S. Forest Service

Of course, Dan's station was the one all about wildlife. He told the students about his job working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and partnering with other agencies and private individuals to protect fish and wildlife for the benefit of the Forest Middle School kids and all the American people. He also discussed some of the unique animals and habitats in Mississippi, shared information on threatened and endangered species, and encouraged the students to see some of the critters first hand at a nearby national wildlife refuge or national forest.

In addition to participating in the environmental education activities, the second-through-fourth graders also heard from two former Olympic athletes who talked about setting goals and "... not letting anyone tell them that they were too short, too slow or too little," as both of these international competitors had been told when they were young. The World Olympians Association is a partner with Kids4Trees and sends their athletes to tree planting events throughout the globe to motivate children and promote environmental protection.

Kids4Trees, organized in 2008, is "... a California non-profit public benefit corporation, acting in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service ... that provides meaningful and enjoyable outdoor forest education ..." to kids who are America's future stewards of forests and the environment."

Submitted by Connie Dickard, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office, Jackson, Mississippi

Wildlife Habitat Restoration on Private Lands conference a success

The Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service conducted the first private lands restoration conference in Arkansas. The conference brought together over 110 federal, state, non-governmental organizations, and private natural resource professionals dedicated to restoring habitat and delivery of conservation programs on private lands.

In addition to Arkansas professionals, the conference attracted attendees from Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Participants learned about new and innovative habitat and restoration techniques, the Farm Bill, and other programs available for private land habitat restoration. Land-owner success stories were shared, and opportunities were available to network with other private lands professionals.



Left to Right: Rebecca McPeak, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Joe Krystofik, USFWS Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office; David Long, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission; Debbie Moreland, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts. Not shown, James Baker, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Arkansas. Photo courtesy of Reston Shrum, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Mark Sattelberg, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service's Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office, opened the conference describing the importance of private lands for wildlife conservation and for achieving the goals of various conservation plans developed by state, federal, and non-governmental conservation organizations. Mark explained that with more than 85 percent of Arkansas land in private ownership, the future of wildlife conservation, especially for threatened and endangered species and species of concern, depends upon private lands. Professionals should work with private land-owners to network, share information about successes and failures, new programs, technology, and acquiring new tools.

Major topics included the Farm Bill as a tool for Wildlife Habitat Restoration, Partnerships, Applied Technology, Riparian and Woodland Restoration, and Managing and Restoring Pasturelands and Prairie. Dr. Wes Burger, Mississippi State University, gave a riveting keynote address integrating the Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives initiatives with individual restoration projects. In addition, Dr. Burger demonstrated a model developed for the State of Mississippi identifying how economic losses on unproductive portions of a farm can be offset by restoration.

Successful restoration projects ranging from native warm season grass establishment and prescribed burning, to prairie and bottomland hardwood forest restoration were highlighted in the session, Putting it on the Ground.

Doug Peterson, Missouri Natural Resources Conservation Service's state grassland specialist, gave an exciting and extremely valuable presentation about high density, high intensity grazing systems which mimic the effect that large herbivores like bison had on the range prior to European settlement. This grazing system promotes a diversity of native grasses and forbs and a vegetative structure beneficial to Northern Bobwhite Quail, white-tailed deer, and a host of other wildlife while maintaining productivity of the herd.

The first Arkansas Private Landowner Stewardship Award was presented to Marvin Mauras for his significant contribution to wildlife conservation. Mauras has devoted time and resources to restore and enhance wildlife habitat on his property and to extend the benefits of this to the public by sponsoring hunting opportunities for youth and disabled sportsmen. He was assisted in development of his wildlife conservation plan by Ralph Meeker, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Private Lands Biologist.

Submitted by Joseph Krystofik, Farm Bill Coordinator, Arkansas Delta Suboffice, Augusta, Arkansas



Chester Figiel teaches students about American alligators. FWS Photo.

Earth Day at LaGrange College

Chester Figiel and Nicole Rankin participated in the 2010 Earth Day Fair at LaGrange College in LaGrange, Georgia, on April 22, 2010. Local private, federal, and state organizations were invited to participate in this event promoting recycling, environmental stewardship, organic gardening, and eco-friendly alternatives. More than 200 students and staff members at the college were provided information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and were able to look at juvenile lake sturgeon and touch crayfish, salamanders, and an American alligator. The staff members also spoke to recent graduates about employment and internship opportunities with the Service.

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

Tuque to be released soon

An Antillean manatee named Tuque is one step closer to swimming free in the Caribbean Sea. Tuque was released in a sea pen to start acclimation to wild conditions after spending more than four years in rehabilitation. He was rescued as a two-month-old calf

On April 21, 2010, staff from the Puerto Rico Manatee Conservation Center (former Caribbean Stranding Network), the Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, and the Puerto Rico Air National Guard, coordinated the construction of the sea pen fence and Tuque's release. The sea pen fence was built to enclose a cove at the Punta Salinas Air National Guard military base in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico. This is the next to last step before Tuque's final release into the wild. It is the second time this area has been used as manatee sea pen. In 2003, another manatee named Rafael was successfully rehabilitated and released into the wild.



Tuque on April 22, 2010, at Punta Salinas, Toa Baja, Puerto Rico. Photo courtesy of Antonio Miguuel, Puerto Rico Manatee Conservation Center

Tuque was found at El Tuque beach in Ponce, Puerto Rico, presumably abandoned by his mother, and was brought into captivity on September 9, 2005. Today, he is a juvenile male manatee of about 460 pounds measuring more than seven feet long. The manatee is in good health and was already eating sea grasses and water hyacinths in captivity. Tuque's release happens after prolonged critical care and rehabilitation conducted by personnel and veterinarians from the Puerto Rico Manatee Conservation Center.

For the next three to six months, Tuque will gradually increase sea grass consumption and eventually will be feeding exclusively on his own and behaving as a wild manatee.

The Caribbean Field Office provided funding for the materials used by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources to build a 700-foot-long fence to enclose the shallow cove. The sea pen location was selected because it contains an abundance of sea grasses and safety considerations. Personnel from the Puerto Rico Manatee Conservation Center will constantly monitor the animal and run veterinary check-ups to help us ensure Tuque is adapting to marine conditions favorably. Once Tuque gains weight and fully adapts to the marine environment, he will be released with a satellite-radio in southern Puerto Rico where he was found.

Submitted by Jan Zegarra, Caribbean Field Office, Boquerón, Puerto Rico

Sea level rise adaptation: successes and challenges after one year

Research and monitoring activities occurring in wetlands adjacent to or nearby Point Peter Road on the eastern edge of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge are getting a lot of attention nationally, even internationally. As the concepts of climate change and sea level rise are being brought to the forefront, scientists are moving beyond, "Is this really happening" to "So, what can be done?" The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has begun a project to test some ways to help sensitive ecosystems and the wildlife that depend on them adapt to this changing world.

Recent vandalism to equipment on the site has caused concern over unnecessary waste and loss of valuable data. Refuge officials seek public help to stop the vandalism. As this work focuses on building resilience into the affected ecosystems for future generations, the work is important to keep our lands and waters in eastern North Carolina productive and healthy for all to enjoy.

Project Update

How to manage wildlife habitat in the face of sea-level-rise is new ground. The reality is that sea levels are rising. A vast majority of the acreage comprising Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge may be under water in the next 100 to 150 years, and this fact makes the refuge a prime candidate for study. The Nature Conservancy and the refuge jointly planned a project to move forward and actually try several management actions in an effort to "buy some time" for wildlife and their habitats to adapt to the rapidly changing environments. The project is being led by TNC Project Leader Brian Boutin, coordinating closely with Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Dennis Stewart. An initial grant from Duke Energy started the project. Since then, Boutin has coordinated other grants and partnerships to grow the project.

The first phase of the project involved experimental plantings of native tree species that show some resistance to salt water compared to pocosin vegetation. Bald cypress, black gum, and pond pine were planted over about 40 acres adjacent to Point Peter Road this past March. Some of the planted trees are more salt-tolerant than the existing trees. The hope is that this management strategy will slow the transition of pocosin wetlands to swamp forest, brackish marsh, or even open water.

Oyster reefs will be constructed near shore to dissipate wave energy on the shoreline. These oyster reefs are expected to slow erosion of the shoreline, improve estuarine water quality, provide near-shore aquatic habitat for numerous fishes, and sequester carbon. Monitoring hydrology, water quality, and plant community parameters for response to management actions is an important component of the overall project. Knowledge gained from this initial project will be used to develop adaptive management strategies elsewhere on the refuge and, possibly, other locations in the region or nation.

Another phase of the project is to place water control structures in strategic locations to prevent the jetting of salt water up the canals and into these freshwater systems. Refuge staff members will install the water control structures and associated culverts, after obtaining permits and approvals from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the North Carolina Division of Water Quality, and the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management.

"We've had a very successful first year," Boutin said, "And, we're encouraged by the public support and interest we've seen. We have conducted several presentations to local rotary clubs and have had numerous individuals from local universities and state agencies come to eastern North Carolina just to learn about this project."

However, there have been some isolated incidents that have caused setbacks and wasted valuable efforts. On several occasions, buoys marking locations for valuable data-gathering systems and other equipment have been tampered with, destroyed, or stolen. In addition to losing costly equipment, which wastes much needed money, the data that were collected, but not yet downloaded, are lost. This equipment is of no value to anyone, except in the field of research. And, with each incidence, the loss sets the project

back weeks or months.

Refuge Manager Mike Bryant describes the project as one of 'national importance' and the vandalism as 'pointless.' "We've always been able to count on our neighbors for help when times get tough," Mike says. "In eastern North Carolina, we all depend on the land and water - whether to put food on our tables, to provide our paychecks, or simply to nourish our souls. This project is one way we are attempting to learn new ways to keep our land and water more productive for a longer period of time."

"If we cannot appeal to the good nature of folks who use the refuge to show respect for our work and the costly equipment we use, we will have no choice but to close project areas, such as Point Peter Road, to all public use," Mike added. "But, certainly, that would be a last resort."

Anyone with information about any vandalism relating to the Point Peter Road Sea-level rise Project is encouraged to contact Refuge Law Enforcement Officer Jay Eddy at 252-216-8724 or call the refuge office at 252-473-1131. For more information about this project, please visit <http://www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/northcarolina/> or contact Brian Boutin at 252-441-2525.

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



Education (left) Terri Jacobson, Andrea Schumann and Andrea Dunstan, along with live animals native to Mississippi, help spread the word about endangered species day at Noxubee NWR. Photo credit: Barbara Crawford, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer

Endangered species celebrated at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge

Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge celebrated Endangered Species Day on May 22. Visitors learned about the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker on the refuge and other endangered and threatened species that are found in Mississippi and throughout the South.

Refuge ranger, Andrea Dunstan invited conservation partners to the refuge to share in the celebration. Andrea Schumann from the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science brought four of her "coworkers" to share with visitors, including an American alligator, a speckled kingsnake and two black-knobbed sawback turtles. The juvenile American alligator was the favorite with both children and adults. The alligator represents a recovered species that can be found on the refuge. Terri Jacobson from the Ecological Services Field Office brought confiscated wildlife items to display and an endangered species matching game for visitors to play.

Submitted by Terri Jacobson, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office, Jackson, Mississippi

Trout in the Classroom, Cub Scouts, and Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

On May 7, 2010, Deborah Burger, fisheries program supervisor, and hatchery manager, and Crystal Thomas, program assistant, attended the fourth annual Fannin County, Georgia, Middle School Trout In the Classroom release on the Toccoa River at Tammen Park. These seventh grade students and science teachers released three- or four-inch rainbows raised from eggs provided by the hatchery.

Teachers have incorporated Trout In the Classroom into all areas of seventh grade education, including art, music, writing, and math. Science teachers have adopted the Biologist-in-Training program as a useful classroom tool.



Deborah Burger, Hatchery Manager/Fisheries Cold Water Program Supervisor, discusses fish barriers with Trout In the Classroom students as they

STEP worker, Zach Thomas, took part in the Trout In the Classroom release with Habersham County students as part of his college studies at North Georgia Technical College.

Terry Callihan, facilities operations specialist, teamed with Trout Unlimited #696 of Blue Ridge in educating cub scouts at the Cub Scout Fishing Derby held at the hatchery on May 8. Approximately 80 cub scouts earned their fishing badge after learning about fishing safety and techniques and catching beautiful Rainbows from Rock Creek.

Submitted by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, Georgia



Earth Day, Panama City, Florida.
Photo by Frank Parauka, FWS.

Earth Day family festivals

Panama City Ecological Services Field Office biologists and volunteers participated in an Earth Day event held on the banks of St Andrew Bay in Panama City. Also, we collaborated with Service biologists from Eglin Air Force Base to participate in the third 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 and nearly 1,500 enthusiastic folks of all ages visited our displays during the two events.



Choctawhatchee Estuary Family Festival, Niceville, Florida. Photo by Frank Parauka, FWS.

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



Volunteer assists participant at Special Kids Fishing Rodeo.
Photo by Crystal Thomas, FWS.

Special Kids Fishing Rodeo at Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

The Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery hosted its 16th annual Special Kids Fishing Rodeo on May 6, 2010. The hatchery brought joy and excitement to 190 disabled children and adults, who would have difficulty gaining access to local rivers and streams to fish. Because of their special needs, each participant required one-on-one assistance by hatchery volunteers and staff. Approximately 40 volunteers from the Friends of the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, U.S. Forest Service, two chapters of Trout Unlimited, and nine Fish and Wildlife Service employees assisted with the event to connect special needs kids and adults with nature. Every participant was provided the opportunity of catching at least one fish, but most caught their limit of eight.

Excitement shows on the faces of the participants. Some scream with delight, some scream in panic, while others want to kiss the fish before either throwing it back or putting it in the sack to take home and eat. The kids love to feel the fish on the line, but they also love to tell you how good they taste when mom, dad, grandma, or whoever fries it up to eat. This is a worthwhile event and it provides a wonderful outdoor experience to children and adults. Each participant is provided with a hatchery t-shirt celebrating the occasion.

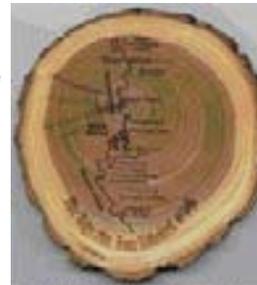
Submitted by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, Georgia

Fannin County named Trout Capital of Georgia

On March 22, 2010, Georgia House Resolution 1773 was adopted that designated Fannin County as the Trout Capital of Georgia. The resolution recognizes numerous trout streams and Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery. Increased tourism, fishing, and revenues are expected as a result of this designation.

Georgia Speaker of the House, David Ralston, presented an official copy of the resolution to city and county officials on May 5, 2010. Terry Callihan, facilities operations specialist, and Crystal Thomas, program assistant, of Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery attended the ceremony held on the Toccoa River at Tammen Park.

Submitted by Crystal Thomas, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, Georgia



Trout Unlimited Number 695 of Blue Ridge, Georgia, Fannin County, map of Toccoa River presented to hatchery staff.



Forestry Technician T.J. Prisock assists student with pumper truck hose. FWS Photo.

Camps allow for new experiences

Noxubee Refuge hosted the Resources for an Inclusive Future camp from Mississippi State University on May 13. Students spent the day learning about birding, forest management, and herpetology, among other topics. Forestry Technician T.J. Prisock demonstrated the fire engine and let the students have a try at aiming the hose. This camp is run by the Wildlife and Fisheries Department and the Forest Resources Department at Mississippi State University and incorporates other disciplines as well.

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



Camp instructor Orlando Elderby with student trying out the pumper truck hose. FWS Photo.

Friends Group --



Participants of the 2010 Fisheries Friends Conference pose for a group photo. Included is Friends of Wolf Creek NFH, Inc. member Barry Begley (second row, fourth from left). Photo by Karta Bartlett, FWS.

Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. attend Fisheries Friends Conference

Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. member Barry Begley, along with Wolf Creek Deputy Project Leader Sheila Kirk, attended the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Friends Group Conference held in Washington D.C., April 20 - 22, 2010. The national conference was an opportunity for Fisheries Friends Groups from across the country to network and share ideas.

In D.C., the group continued the momentum created last year by providing a national forum to support and expand the number of Fisheries Friends Groups; promoting the conservation of aquatic resources; providing educational opportunities for the public; and to advocating the Service's mission. Attendees also learned more about the Fisheries Program budget, along with both current and future program priorities, potential lobbying/partnering organizations, the formation of the established national

association, including bylaws review, and spent time on the Hill with the various Senate and Congressional representatives to discuss important issues relating to the goals of the Fisheries Program and the overall mission of the Service.

While on Capitol Hill, representatives from Wolf Creek Hatchery also met with staffers of U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell from Kentucky, along with those representing U.S. Congressmen from Kentucky, Ed Whitfield and Hal Rogers.

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

Hats Off -



Eugene and Danila inspecting buffing pads for Gulf sturgeon eggs on the Brothers River, Florida. Photo by Frank Parauka, FWS.

International volunteers donate 200 hours

Danila Hartmann and Eugene Mair added an international flair to the Panama City Ecological Services Field Office's volunteer roster. While visiting from Germany, Panama City Field Office staff member and relative Matt Laschet made sure their three-week visit to Florida was completely filled. Danila and Eugene contributed almost 200 hours of volunteer work! Every day was truly an adventure for them and certainly for us too! They demonstrated an admirable work ethic and enthusiasm to learn. They assisted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission with electrofishing striped bass, helped the U S Army Corps of Engineers during a trawling survey to collect young of the year fish, helped our office with outreach, plant investigations, and Gulf sturgeon telemetry, collecting and tagging fish, and investigating Gulf sturgeon spawning using egg collection pads. Danila and Eugene were busy during their stay, but Matt managed to show them some of the highlights of Florida: white sandy beaches with the emerald Gulf waters, Everglades, the Keys, alligators, manatees, and an old Southern staple of boiled peanuts, which they enjoyed. We appreciated their help and look forward to a return trip! More photos in [Photo Album](#).

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

I Gave '8' --



BOW participants in a Map and Compass class learn to navigate under an oak tree. Photo by Melody Hay-Culp, FWS.

Becoming an Outdoor Woman workshops in Florida

Don't let the funky name and potential for pink camo put you off! This is a terrific program that gets women, city and country gals alike, out on the land and into the water. Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) workshops offer a relaxed and supportive outdoor classroom for gentle immersion, allowing women to get comfortable outside and ready to connect with family and friends who love to hike, camp, hunt, fish, canoe, watch birds, and otherwise enjoy Florida's natural resources. Participants arrive for lunch on a Friday afternoon and depart after lunch on Sunday, having taken four classes from a menu of 25 that includes everything from pan, bass, and fly fishing; to archery, handguns, long-guns, and muzzleloaders; to backpacking, wilderness survival, knot tying, and orienteering; to canoeing/kayaking and motor-boating; to the most popular Primitive Chef, which really should be called Primitive Gourmet! There's also plenty to do in the evening with campfires, story-telling, star-gazing, and night hiking. Participants also can obtain Hunter Safety Certification, good for a lifetime and accepted in every state.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission offers three BOW workshops each year around the state. The cost is \$175 for the "deluxe package" (bed in a rustic, air-conditioned bunkhouse), with a discount to "tenters." The likes of Bass Pro Shops and Cabelas are generous sponsors of BOW, with each graduating class adding more shoppers to their aisles. Where else can you pick up a camo teddy along with a turkey whistle, cross-bow, and ammo? Of the 101 ladies at last year's spring workshop in Ocala National Forest, about 75 percent were first-timers, though some gals return many times to enjoy the camaraderie and practice their skills. After three workshops as a participant, "I Gave 8" and extended the fun by volunteering as an assistant instructor.

Submitted by Melody Ray-Culp, Florida Panhandle Coastal Program, Panama City, FL Ecological Services Field Office



A BOW participant tends to dutch ovens while baking pineapple upside down cake and pork loin in marmalade during a Primitive Chef class. Photo by Melody Ray-Culp, FWS.

Photo Album --

International volunteers donate 200 hours -- more photos

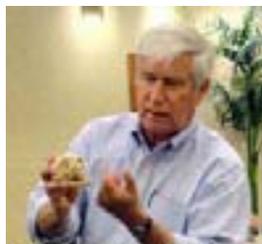


Danila and Eugene with the Catch of the Day, a 90-pound Gulf sturgeon caught in the Choctawhatchee River, Florida. Photo by Frank Parzuka, FWS.



Danila and Eugene assisting the Corps of Engineers with staking for young of the year fish in the Apalachicola River, Florida. Photo by Matt Laschet, FWS.

Visitor Services --



Dr. Rudy Mancke. Photo by Susan Heisey, FWS.

Annual Santee Birding and Nature Festival

With binoculars around their necks and field guides in their backpacks, birders and nature lovers flocked to Santee, South Carolina, for the Annual Santee Birding and Nature Festival. Although a fledgling event, only begun in 2008, this year's festivities attracted more than 200 individual registrations and attracted a couple from as far away as Quebec, Canada, to attend the keynote dinner with Dr. Rudy Mancke. Mancke, from public television's *Naturescene*, had the banquet attendees on the edge of their seats listening to his stories as he passionately shared his love and knowledge of the natural world.

Held on April 23, 2010, the three-day festival hosted many nature workshops and such broader activities as Wildlife Photography, Nature Illustration, and Pine Needle Basket Making. Birding trips abounded as guides led eager participants to the Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Audubon Center at Beidler Forest, Manchester State Forest, Pointsett State Park, Santee State Park and Congaree National Park.

This event is a partnership in the truest sense of the word. Many organizations come together with the mission of increasing awareness of our heritage in natural areas and to provide wildlife watching opportunities in midland South Carolina.

Submitted by Susan Heisey, Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Summerton, South Carolina

Wage Grade Profile --

Michael Parkinson's dedicated work keeps Okefenokee running



Michael Parkinson. Photo by Elaine Eckberg, FWS.

Providing maintenance in a refuge that is almost 402,000 acres in size (over half the size of Rhode Island) can be a daunting job, but Michael Parkinson is up to the task. After serving in the Army for three years and working for the U.S. Navy as a civilian for fifteen years, Michael joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to seek new challenges as a maintenance worker at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

As he begins his third year at Okefenokee, Michael is often called to do the work of a carpenter, plumber, water technician, electrician, equipment operator, groundskeeper, and supervisor of several volunteers

"He is busy but flexible, with his regular work often being interrupted to take care of emergencies, from electrical problems to repairing broken water lines," Gracie Gooch, acting supervisory refuge ranger, says. "Despite the daily interruptions, he finds solutions to unexpected problems and breakdowns."

One project Michael is working on is the development of a new water system for the refuge. This project involves

overseeing the construction of a more than 600 foot deep water well, treatment building, and pipe system. This system will improve water safety and taste for visitors, employees, and volunteers when completed this spring.

“Michael did a great job working with refuge management and the contractor to make sure the building and water system was up to state quality standards,” Gracie says.

Michael will continue to monitor the system and conduct state-mandated water quality tests twice a week to ensure that the water at Okefenokee is top quality.

There is a lot of maintenance work that must be done to keep Okefenokee functioning. Without his conscientious work the refuge literally could not operate. In Michael’s free time away from the refuge, he likes to fish and garden.

Submitted by Blaine Eckberg, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, Georgia

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