



Chief Editor: Elsie Davis

May - June 2014



## RD's Corner

Summer is on its way, and it's time to proclaim nationwide, "Everybody outside!"

A summertime tradition around our house is to grab the fishing poles and the sunblock and head to the lake. We glory in the season because outdoor recreation plays such a significant role in our family's life. For me, it is a generational thing. Some of my best days growing up were spent fishing with my dad in the rivers near our home in Pennsylvania. Eric and I have passed this outdoor recreation tradition on to our boys.

Our story isn't unique. Individuals and families across the Southeast and all of America relish the opportunities summertime brings, and for good reason: there is simply no better place on earth to enjoy the outdoors than the USA. The diversity of our landscapes and waters provides opportunities for every imaginable outdoor recreation activity, from basking in the sun on white sand beaches to hiking up mountain trails. This love of the outdoors is what fuels the passion we in the Fish and Wildlife Service have to conserve America's natural resources so that future generations will receive an intact natural legacy to enjoy.

Outdoor recreation brings families together; it also brings people everywhere in touch with a big part of what has made America great. In the last two decades, Americans from all walks of life have united around local, regional and national efforts to

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Director Dan Ashe and Senator Mark Pryor with Dale Bumpers' family during the unveiling of a new refuge entrance sign, John Stark. photo: John Stark

## White River National Wildlife Refuge renamed Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge

*By Ron Hollis, Deputy Project Leader*

Dan Ashe, Director, Cindy Dohner, Southeast Regional Director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Senator Mark Pryor, Arkansas, joined with Service employees, conservation partners, friends and members of the Bumpers family on April 18, 2014, to officially rename White River National Wildlife

Refuge to Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge.

Refuge Manager Bo Sloan welcomed all guests to Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge and introduced the Master of Ceremonies for the program, Cindy Dohner.

"We are here to honor two legacies: White River National Wildlife Refuge and Dale Bumpers," Cindy said. "Significant contributions were made to Cache River and White River National Wildlife Refuges. He was key in national wildlife conservation and what he did in Arkansas."

Dale Bumpers became the 38th Governor of Arkansas and a four-term U.S. Senator who facilitated the Arkansas-Idaho Land Exchange Act of 1992. This innovative land exchange, to swap Idaho timberland for bottomland forests and wetlands in Arkansas, added 41,000 acres to the White

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*RD's Corner continued...*

celebrate and perpetuate America's outdoor heritage. All 50 governors of the United States have proclaimed June as Great Outdoors Month for several years running. We celebrate National Fishing and Boating Week, National Trails Day®, and the Great American Backyard Campout in June. National Get Outdoors Day is June 14, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and the recreation industry are teaming up to host events to encourage healthy, active outdoor fun at sites across the nation. Prime goals of the day are to reach underserved populations and first-time visitors to public lands, and to reconnect our youth to the great outdoors.

There is a great opportunity and a challenge for us in all of this. We know that people take care of what they value. And they value what they are connected to—what brings meaning to their lives. Every day in our work, we realize the importance of engaging both traditional and non-traditional partners early and often in the conservation of America's fish, wildlife and plant resources. The scope of the stressors on the landscape are such that only through partnership with an aware, informed, and active public can we make a lasting difference for the future of wildlife and people.

Our challenge is to do our part in the Southeast Region to take advantage of this opportunity. We can look at the work we do every day through the lens of making the human connection with individuals and groups who impact the success of what we do, now and for the future. We want to understand what they value, and why and to share what we value, and why.

The Department of the Interior has jumped into this opportunity feet first, with an ambitious initiative to inspire millions of young people and veterans to play, learn, serve and work outdoors. In March 2014, DOI Secretary Sally Jewel issued a Secretarial Order to significantly expand recreational, educational, volunteer and career opportunities for millions of youth and veterans on the nation's public lands, including partnerships with businesses, conservation organizations,

Tribes, and youth organizations to support the Administration's 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. In signing the order, the Secretary referenced what we in the Service know to be true: that for Americans to have healthy lifestyles, healthy lands, and a healthy economy, we've got to take concrete steps to bridge the growing divide between young people and nature.

Whether we sponsor an outdoor recreation opportunity at a field station, hire youth, or engage with veterans and volunteers, we will be furthering the work of the Service and the Region by connecting people to the natural world. Carrying out these activities in partnership with others, such as businesses, states, and Tribes, also expands a mutual understanding that we are all in this together and each of us has a role to play.

Happy summer, everyone! I hope you will join me in enjoying the great outdoors and connecting others to the wonders that await them. ❖

- *Cindy*

*White River NWR continued*

River and Cache River National Wildlife Refuges. As governor, he helped stop the channelization of 232 miles of Cache River and its tributary, Bayou De View, with help from a political cartoonist known as George Fisher.

"It is my first time to be at White River and what a great day, what a great occasion to be here to commemorate not just this great refuge but a great statesman. When I think about the future, a father and son hunting waterfowl or grandfather and granddaughters fishing for bass, crappie, or catfish, or a birdwatcher here to watch birds in the spring or fall, they will learn something about the natural world when they come here and learn not just about conservation, but they will learn about public service and statesmanship," said Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Senator Mark Pryor said, "He was able to engineer a land swap that was worth about 20 million dollars and there wasn't a dime of taxpayer money involvement with

it. He was able to find a win-win solution with the land swap. This is a great credit to his leadership and vision for White River."

"Hopefully in the years to come we will see people hunting with their sons out here. The idea that he contributed to that around here is a wonderful thing," said Bill Bumpers, Dale Bumpers' son.

Cindy commended refuge staff, with help from Connie Dickard, Ecological Services' Mississippi Field Office, who did a wonderful job on the event and ensure that everything ran smoothly. Each staff member helped with the ceremony by securing tents and chairs, helping with set-up, greeting invited guests, handing out programs, and taking photos needed for our outreach.

Photographs were taken with the Bumpers family during the unveiling of the sign with Dan Ashe and Senator Mark Pryor. A commemorative gift, a smaller version of the new refuge sign, secured by Garry Tucker, USFWS, was presented to the Bumpers family by Director Dan Ashe. There was a great turnout for the renaming ceremony with around 70 people sharing stories and enjoying cake after the event. ❖

## Dear Elsie

When is a compatibility determination required to be done for a refuge?

*/s/Wondering*

### Response from Southeast Refuge Chief, David Viker

Compatibility determinations are required for all proposed uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, whether by the public or staff, that are not considered "refuge management activities." Some examples are prescribed burns, forestry, invasive exotic plant/animal removal, maintenance of existing facilities, law enforcement, and inventorying and monitoring. ❖

# Employee Spotlight

## Gisella Burgos, Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Puerto Rico

By Jennifer Strickland, External Affairs

Gisella Burgos oozes enthusiasm and positivity. I can almost hear her smile through the telephone. It's no wonder why she's so happy; as the Visitor Services Specialist for the Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuges, Gisella has the pleasure of living near the beach, her favorite place in the world. "Just looking at the beach, watching my surfers, walking on the beach with my dogs, listening to the waves. I am connected to the beach," she says.

A top priority in Gisella's life is her family. "We're a team," she says. Her sons, Roger and Maximilian, are both swimmers and surfers. Roger swims for the University of Puerto Rico, and Max swims for a local swimming team. Gisella is also a self-proclaimed dog person with five dogs: two labs, one terrier, and two mutts.

Another passion of Gisella's is yoga, specifically, ashtanga yoga. As an exercise for both body and mind, she practices yoga as a way to push her own limits and achieve personal goals. "It's a competition with yourself," she says. "That's what I like about it."

A former Park Ranger with the National Park Service, Gisella joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2001 as a Park Ranger at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. "Always a Park Ranger," she laughs. "Here in Visitor Services, I get to meet people from everywhere. Not only from a diversity of places, but with a diversity of knowledge of the resource. It's about transmitting my passion to them and trying to see if they can see it through my eyes."

Every day, Gisella asks herself how she can improve the world. She believes that life is a gift. "If you're awake, you should be very grateful for life. Do the best you can for the world. I believe we all have a purpose." ❖



Gisella with her family on vacation in Costa Rica, courtesy of Gisella Burgos.

## What's Trending

By Katherine Taylor, External Affairs



**Apps:** Are you an avid birder?

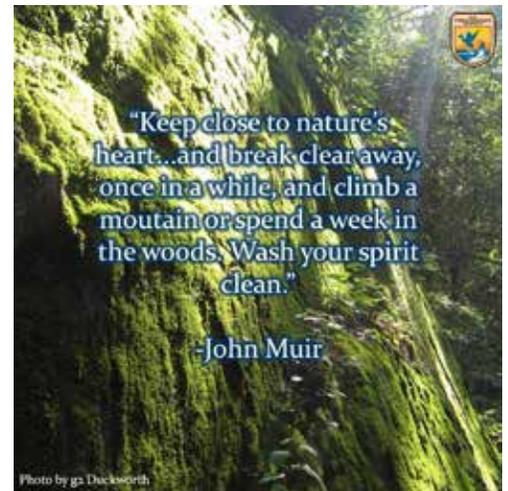
Want to share your observations and sightings with the birding community? Then be sure to check out Audubon Birds Pro for only \$0.99. This app gives you access to seasonal and migratory bird maps, uses eBird to identify 821 species, and provides eight hours of high quality bird songs. Eight percent of every sale goes directly to Audubon to support its mission to conserve and protect nature's at-risk birds and wildlife.

**#MostSharedStory:** Happy Birthday to one of America's most influential conservationists, the great John Muir! To mark the day we shared some of his words of wisdom. Judging by the 479 Facebook shares and 86 retweets, it's obvious they resonated with our followers.

**Social Media:** April marked our second At-Risk Species Awareness Month. This once again gave us an opportunity to communicate what an at-risk species is, along with highlighting different plants and critters.

**Culture:** You may have heard of #ThrowBackThursday and #FlashbackFriday, but have you heard of #Haikusday? This social media trend

gives users an opportunity to get a little creative and turn their status into a haiku. Will you be celebrating next Tuesday or should we say #Haikusday? ❖



## Bragging Rights



There were several exhibits at the FWS Retirees tent depicting refuge habitats and wildlife during the past 75 years, photo: Garry Tucker/USFWS.

### Carolina Sandhills marks 75th anniversary

By Allyn Askins, Carolina Sandhills

It was a picture-perfect spring day in South Carolina for a Conservation Celebration. On Saturday, March 15, 2014, Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge celebrated its 75th anniversary with the help of our Friends Group, volunteers, and partners. About 200 people attended the event at the Lake Bee Recreation Area.

The day featured five tours: an early morning birding excursion, a wildlife photography workshop, a sandhills geology and longleaf ecology combination wagon and hiking tour, a natural history walk, and a longleaf pine ecosystem wagon tour.

From 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., our conservation partners provided exhibits and children's activities. As participants arrived they received their Conservation Passport. A visit to a participating exhibitor and completion of the planned activity earned a stamp in the Passport. Once the Passport was full, each participant earned a 75th Anniversary Patch. Exhibitors included Pee Dee Land Trust, McLeod Farms, Clemson Extension, Olde English District

Tourism Commission, Friends of Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, Sonoco Recycling, Sand Hills State Forest, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and Ducks Unlimited. Activities included map and compass, archery, laser shooting, face painting, duck calling, animal track identification, fire engine, coloring, Cheerios bird



L to R: Retired Refuge Supervisor Pete Jerome, Refuge Ranger Monica Harris (Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex), Refuge Manager Allyn Askins, and Biologist Wayne Harris (Charleston ES Field Office) enjoyed the opportunity to spend time together during the day's festivities. photo: Deborah Jerome/USFWS.

feeders, and learning about pollinators. A big hit was a visit from Puddles the Blue Goose. Retired Refuge Ranger Kay McCutcheon planned special activities and exhibits for former and retired employees. Retired Refuge Forester Dave Robinson and Retired Biological Technician Olin Morrison staffed the hospitality tent and welcomed invited guests and VIPs. McCutcheon presented a refuge photo album to each family. After a brief ceremony in which McCutcheon gave a refuge history and shared remembrances of her 30 years at Sandhills, everyone enjoyed cake and fellowship. Other retirees or family members who attended included Julius Loffin, the family of Ellis Sweeney, the family of Louis Tate, the family of Roy Rogers, numerous YCC and YACC alumni and retired Refuge Supervisor Pete Jerome.

The Friends of Carolina Sandhills NWR worked with the Sandhills Volunteer Fire Department and the Central High

School Varsity Softball Team to provide a delicious and hearty barbecue lunch. McLeod Farms provided a wagon to assist with transportation and the Association of Retired Fish and Wildlife Service Employees provided financial assistance. We thank everyone who contributed time, talent or funds to make these events, tours, and exhibits possible. Special thanks and recognition goes to Monica Harris, Park Ranger and Volunteer Sharon Lindsay from Savannah Coastal Refuges, Biologist Wayne Harris from the Charleston Ecological Services Field Office, and Regional Visitor Services Chief Garry Tucker for their assistance. ❖



The exhibit. photo: Dr. Rebecca Heiss, The Governor's School for Science and Mathematics.

### Carolina Sandhills celebrates 75th anniversary with science and monitoring posters traveling exhibit

By Allyn Askins, Carolina Sandhills

At its 75th anniversary celebration on March 15, 2014, Carolina Sandhills unveiled a project that engages past partners and researchers with current high school and college students.

While the public is familiar with our recreational programs, many are not aware of the monitoring and research studies that have occurred here in the longleaf pine ecosystem. As a Land Management Research and Demonstration Refuge, we are encouraged to develop management techniques that may be implemented on private and non-federal lands. Another emphasis is youth education and providing information about careers in science. To showcase research and monitoring efforts during past decades, we invited researchers from 1970 to present to submit posters of projects conducted on the refuge; eighteen researchers produced *FThtTT*

posters to be part of the traveling exhibit. The range of topics includes red-cockaded woodpecker foraging habitat (1970, 1994, 1998, current research), Native Solitary Bees (2006), Pine Barrens Tree frogs {monitoring, genetics} (1997, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013); Geological Modeling (current); Carolina Pygmy Sunfish (2005), Coyote Food Habits (2010-present), South Carolina Stream Assessment (2006), Wiregrass {habitat management; genetics} (1995, 1997, 2000, 2008, 2010); and Bachman's Sparrow and Prescribed Fire (1997).

These posters will rotate through four South Carolina high schools between March and May, and three South Carolina colleges from September through October, 2014. Locations include Coker College in Hartsville; Clemson University,

Francis Marion University in Florence, Hartsville High School International Baccalaureate Programme, McBee High School, Mayo High School for Science, Math and Technology in Darlington, and the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics in Hartsville. Three of the participating high schools have advanced curricula in science and mathematics for South Carolina's brightest students. The exhibit will be available during the summer for conferences and meetings. We are currently working with the Longleaf Alliance to display the exhibit during its 10th biennial meeting in Mobile, Alabama, from October 21-24, 2014. The refuge staff extends a sincere thank you to the researchers who supported this project and contributed their time and talents. ❖

Everyone grabbed a snack and water, awaiting the moment we had anticipated. I gathered all the paddlers together and to the interior we went. Clean air, clean water, solitude, and the sacred were all spoken of during the time on the interior, and then we paddled back – in half the time.

“Didn't know if I was up to the challenge, and boy, was it a challenge! So proud of myself for doing it!” exclaimed Sallie Gentry.

It's said by some paddlers there are three kinds of fun. This paddle was the second kind. It may involve rattled nerves and frustration while it's happening, but it builds character and makes us better paddlers... and better people. ❖



Deborah Jerome thoroughly enjoyed the day, photo: Pam Darty/USFWS

### Paddling to the “Big W”

By Pam Darty, Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges

Federal land agencies across the country are celebrating “W50”, the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. It's a gift we gave ourselves as a nation. After starting off our country with the ethnocentric idea of manifest destiny, the Wilderness Act was more of a sacred act for their descendants.

The Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges celebrated six months out from the actual 50th

anniversary date with a “Paddle to the Big W(ilderness)”. Sixteen dare-devils, including the Regional Office's (Refuges' Visitor Services) Deborah Jerome and Sallie Gentry, paddled out to North Key on a very windy day with rough seas that would have turned most away for a warm dry place.

With a dependable sweep, I headed out across the gnarly open water gritting my teeth. It was not the weather I had pictured when planning the event. I figured if I could keep going across those rollers, it would keep everyone moving forward. Everyone knew from the get-go it was a paddle for advanced sea-kayakers, and they were psyched for it.

The group of enthusiasts had travelled from Archer, Ocala, Chiefland, Cedar Key, and Atlanta. They were lured with a promise of going into the designated Wilderness Area of North Key, closed to humans 24/7/365 forever, except this moment. So, we all paddled our hearts out to live in the moment. Waves splashed across the bow and into the kayaks, winds constantly pushed the kayaks to the northeast while everyone struggled to paddle to the west. Finally, we all reached the island and its quiet bayou tucked-in, out of the wind.



USFWS Honor Guard at the Nation's Capitol, photo: USFWS

### FWS Law Enforcement employees recognized by Secretary Jewell

By Rolf Olson, A.R.M. Loxahatchee

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Officers, and Service Honor Guard members William Calvert, Jason Vehrs, Stacey Welch, Philip Amoroso and James McClellan, as well as Service K-9 Officers Eddie Brannon, Adam Rawlinson, Darrin Speegle, and Darryn Witt, each received the following e-mail from Secretary Jewell for their participation

### Leadership Quote

*“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead to where there is no path and leave a trail.”*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

in a recent deployment to Marion, North Carolina, to honor U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer Jason Crisp and his K-9 partner Maros. They were both tragically killed in the line of duty on March 12, 2014, while assisting in a manhunt for a murder suspect in North Carolina:

*Dear Wesley, Darrin, Anne, Michael, Will, William, James, Philip, Stacey, Eddie, Adam, Darrin, and Darryn*

*Many thanks for your service in law enforcement and your support of Officer Crisp and his USFS unit following his death in the line of duty. The outpouring of community support after this tragic event is a tribute to the important work that each of you do every day in protecting people and our cherished natural resources. It is clear from Officer Crisp's actions and those of each of you, that the badge you wear and the unit you represent doesn't matter when it comes to supporting your fellow officers at a time of need.*

*I know that your role went well beyond the ceremony of being an honor guard and accompanying K-9 team, as you helped the family and fellow officers cope with their loss and pay tribute to their service. Thanks for your service to your bureau, the Department of the Interior, and the American people. I am very proud and honored to be a part of your team.*

*Warmly,*

*Sally Jewell*



*Environmentalists meet at St. Marks. photo: courtesy of The Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council.*

### International visitors learn about St. Marks

*By Lori Nicholson, North Florida National Wildlife Refuge Complex*

Recently, the program coordinator for the Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council contacted me to set up a meeting with a group of nine environmentalists from around the world. The Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council is a non-profit organization working with the U.S. Department of State to host visiting delegations of foreign professionals invited to our country as part of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). One of the group's objectives was to learn about efforts in the U.S. to protect biodiversity through advocacy efforts and environmental education.

The group arrived on a rainy Tuesday afternoon in April. Participants came from Finland, Kenya, Laos, Nigeria, Romania, South Africa, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

During our meeting we discussed the educational program we offer at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, the challenges stemming from population growth and increasing development in the area and how we work with area schools to meet educational standards. Participants were excited to learn about our programs and how well we partner with the schools and various organizations and agencies to educate the children and their families. We concluded the meeting with a drive to the Lighthouse. Everyone was impressed with the refuge and expressed their interest in spending more time viewing the wildlife and beautiful scenery. ❖



*Participants from the Queen of Peace Catholic Church and Mission, photo: Serena Rinker.*

### Urban Refuge Initiative Alive at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

*By Serena Rinker, Loxahatchee Refuge*

On Saturday, April 26, 2014, the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Boynton Beach, Florida, hosted 17 children and six parents from the Education Department at Queen of Peace Catholic Church and Mission for an Insects Come Alive program. This was the refuge's first program specifically designed to answer the Urban Refuge Initiative.

The refuge provided transportation to and from the church. Two volunteers gave a 20-minute *What is an Insect?* slide show that focused on two butterfly species found on the refuge: the Ruddy Daggerwing and the Palamedes Swallowtail. After the slide show presentation the volunteer entomologists and refuge staff members led an investigative walk along the Cypress Swamp Boardwalk where the children were able to use magnifying lens and binoculars to look at various insects. The children and their parents delighted in finding caterpillars, eggs and butterflies. ❖

## Congratulations Jennifer!



*Jennifer Garland, wildlife biologist in the Kentucky Field Office, kneels by some Kentucky gladeceess plants.*

The Kentucky gladeceess was listed as a threatened species on May 6, 2014, and this was Jennifer's first listing action. ❖

## Kentucky field offices gather at Wolf Creek

*By Teresa DeVore, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery*

On March 26, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery hosted the fifth annual Kentucky field offices meeting. Attendees included staff members from the Kentucky Ecological Services Office, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge; Louisville Port Office of Law Enforcement, Law Enforcement Special Agents Regional Office of Federal Aid, and Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery.



*Kentucky field offices gather at Wolf Creek for annual meeting, photo, USFWS*

Each office shared information about its program and current issues. Other discussions included a presentation by the Corps of Engineers on the \$600 million repair of Wolf Creek Dam, the



*The Blue Goose and Smokey the Bear, photo: Nova Clarke.*

Fisheries Watershed Ranking Tool, and a tour of the Wolf Creek Dam and Powerhouse. Participants agreed the meeting was a success, and plans are to continue the annual meeting to ensure the Service's one-family approach continues. ❖

## Community Earth Day in Monroe, Louisiana

*By Nova Clarke, Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge*

Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Monroe, Louisiana, partnered with the City of Monroe's Downtown River Market and the Chemistry Department from the University of Louisiana for a community Earth Day on April 12th. The students from the university developed a chemistry passport where participants went from station to station doing hands-on science and could get a cupcake when they had completed all the activities. The City of Monroe Water Department, The Nature Conservancy, and Keep Ouachita Beautiful also participated. As people shopped, they learned about the importance of protecting the environment and enjoyed a beautiful day by the Ouachita River. Black Bayou Lake sponsored an Earth Day poster contest for local students, and the art work is displayed in the Visitor Center. The Blue Goose served as an ambassador for the refuge system. After an initial mock-challenge with Smokey Bear, who was there with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, both large animals were out taking pictures and being ambassadors of the idea that all of us need to work together to help the environment. ❖

# Follow the Leader

## Jereme Phillips, Project Leader, Gulf Coast Refuges Complex

(Mississippi Sandhill Crane, Bon Secour, and Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuges)



Jereme Phillips. Photo courtesy of Jereme Phillips.

By Jennifer Strickland, External Affairs

### Tell us about your career path and how you became a Project Leader.

My career began in 1996 working as a Fish and Wildlife Technician for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. I started working for the Service in 1998, as a seasonal Biological Technician at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota.

In 1999, I received my first permanent position as a GS-4 Biotech at Mississippi Sandhill Crane. My primary duty was monitoring cranes, but as a collateral duty, I also served as a wildland firefighter. I spent four years in that position. I was hired in 2003 as a Wildlife Biologist at Bon Secour. Another four years passed, and I was selected to be the Refuge Manager in 2007.

I have been the Project Leader for the Gulf Coast Refuges Complex since February 2013. My career has come full

circle, and I feel honored to serve in this role. Hopefully my experiences in the biological and fire programs provided a good foundation for my current position and allow me to relate to the challenges that our employees face every day.

### You were an integral part of our agency's response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. How did you manage through that challenging experience?

The only good thing about bad things that happen is that they give you perspective; you stop worrying about the little things as much after you've dealt with real crises. I had been through several major hurricanes as a manager, so I was able to draw from those experiences when the oil spill occurred. I learned a long time ago to take care of my staff first, and I learned to differentiate between the moments within a disaster that require immediate, decisive action and those that require a more deliberate, long-term strategy. If you don't have experience, then every situation within a disaster can seem like an emergency. Whether it's a hurricane, an oil spill, or any other challenge, the situation is dynamic, not static, and you have to adapt.

I also learned that you have to take care of yourself. I'm an avid runner and I make time for exercise because it helps to give me energy and clarity of thought to deal with difficult situations. I read an article about how the commanding U.S. General in Afghanistan runs every day because he feels it's so important, and if he can keep his routine in the middle of a war, then surely I can too.

### Can you tell us more about how you practice "taking care of staff first?"

When I became a Project Leader last year, I shared my top three priorities with our staff: safety, employee professional development, and teamwork. Those priorities all have something in common, and that's our people. I want our employees to return home safely to their friends and family at the end of the work day, I want them to grow as leaders in their chosen fields, and I want to see them work together as a team.

My goal was that if I identified these priorities, they would be reflected in everything that we do, and we would

invest in our employees so that they can go out and do the work of conservation. Whenever possible, it simplifies and prioritizes decisions when you can run them through a litmus test of whether or not they will strengthen the team.

### Have you had any mentors that played a role in shaping your work ethic?

As a wildlife biology student, I saw an announcement posted on a bulletin board for job shadow opportunities, and all of the professionals listed there were state biologists, except for one, who was a Refuge Manager. At that time I had never heard of national wildlife refuges; but, I've always been someone who wants to try something different, so I reached out to Jim Williams who was the Refuge Manager for Hagerman NWR in Texas. Jim took the time to show me around the refuge for a couple of days, and I was hooked. He's been a mentor to me for many years, and although he's now retired, we still keep in touch. Because of that experience, I drop everything when a student wants to talk to me about careers because I am grateful for the time that Jim and others gave to me.

### What's the most powerful piece of career advice you've received?

When I became a supervisor about seven years ago, it was not clear to me whether I had the skill set to be a good leader. I had never shouldered this level of responsibility. I spoke to my father who was a career Air Force officer and one of the best leaders that I know. He said, "Well, you'll be a good leader because you care about people." It's for others to judge whether or not I'm a good leader, but this simple comment has stayed with me for all these years.

### Can you recommend any good movies, books, or training courses for aspiring leaders?

I completed the Stepping Up to Leadership program at NCTC, and it was excellent. I also would recommend just about any book about Lincoln, but these two are particularly good: "Lincoln" by David Herbert Donald and "Team of Rivals" by Doris Kearns Goodwin. You can't go wrong by studying the leadership qualities of our greatest president.

## Do you have any advice to share with emerging leaders in the Southeast Region?

Take on responsibility before you are ready. Life is short and there will never be a “good time” to do anything, so if there’s a skill that you want to acquire or something that you want to accomplish, do it now. Work on developing a foundation of technical knowledge, confidence, and strong principles so that you can make tough decisions. Saying “yes” all day doesn’t require any particular set of skills. Leadership has many facets, but one of the most important is the willingness to make unpopular decisions when it’s the right thing to do. ❖

## Get to Know an Office

### The Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Case Management Office

*By Nanciann Regalado, Deepwater Horizon, NRDAR*

Four years ago the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill radically altered our approach to Gulf of Mexico restoration. The U.S. will require BP and other parties ultimately found responsible for the spill to compensate the public for the injuries they caused to Gulf natural resources and services. This compensation will have the potential to inject billions of dollars into a gulf-wide natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) effort managed by the five Gulf States and four federal agencies that make up the DWH Oil Spill NRDA Trustees.

Playing a critical role in the challenge of assessing injury and planning and implementing restoration projects is DWH NRDAR Program which consists of a 14-person DWH Case Management Office (CMO) and a nine-person Field Office in Fairhope, Alabama. The CMO is highlighted in this issue of E-grits. We will introduce the Fairhope Office staff to you in the next newsletter.

Although employed by FWS, the CMO staff has DOI-wide responsibilities for overseeing and coordinating all

assessment and restoration activities across involved DOI bureaus. The CMO staff members are located in multiple states and include:

**Kevin Reynolds:** I’ve worked for the Service for nine years, and in that time I have worked in three regions and have had the opportunity to work in a field office, Headquarters, and our Regional Office down here in the Southeast. Experiencing how our agency conducts its business at all three levels of the organization has proved invaluable, and I love how our one central mission of conservation connects all of us across the country. The best part of working as the Deepwater Horizon NRDAR Case Manager, supervising the largest Natural Resource Damage Assessment in the history of the United States, is the great people I have the privilege to work beside every day. When the BP oil spill happened four years ago, none of the positions we now have in the CMO existed. That means we had the opportunity to sit down, create a plan for success, and then go out and recruit people we thought would be best suited for the dozen or so unique and brand new positions within Region 4. We were able to choose from the best of the best around the country, and this foundation of great conservation professionals has made all the difference in the Department’s success as we prepare our claim and implement millions of dollars in early restoration. My wife and I live in Johns Creek with our three children (Kelly – aged 5, Nick -age 3, Caitlin – age 9 months) and love living in the state Georgia. I went to grad school at Clemson University, and enjoy going back there for a Saturday game day in the fall.

**Debora McClain:** I started my career with the federal government in 1987 working for the U.S. Army in Worms, Germany while my husband was stationed overseas. A lot has happened in 27 years and, although at times it’s been a bit of a bumpy ride, it’s been a wonderful experience. In thinking back over my career, I realize that I’ve had the opportunity to work in a diverse array of unique jobs. Fortunately, I stumbled into the budget and financial arena after I accepted my first position as a secretary (which I quickly learned was not my calling). Luckily, the job was in a communications billing office and my boss, realizing I was better with numbers, put me to work doing billings. My last position with the Army was in a weapons testing

unit at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where I was one of only two civilians allowed to fire a Paladin Tank that was being tested for use during Desert Storm. While working at Ft. Sill, I spent many weekends with my husband and two children viewing buffalo at the nearby Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The entire time I was unaware that my next job would be working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland, Oregon, on spill response and NRDAR. In my 21 years with the Service I’ve worked in three regions in Ecological Services, Fisheries, and Budget and Administration. I also worked for five years in Endangered Species in the Washington Office. Like so many others in the Service, I willingly jumped in when the DWH oil spill occurred, not knowing then how much my life would change. I spent 11 months on detail to Region 4 before deciding to take the Deputy Case Manager position. I am located in Denver, Colorado. This position is the “cherry” on top of my career, and I consider myself extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work not only on a historic project, but also with a great group of dedicated individuals.

**Gina Ballard:** I’m the IT Specialist for the DWH NRDAR Case Management Office and have worked for the Service for 23.5 years. Prior to joining the CMO two years ago, I worked at the South Texas Refuge Complex in Alamo, Texas. I currently support the CMO and Fairhope staff. I also maintain the DOI database pertaining to the case and post case-related information to the Administrative Record on the DOI Deepwater Horizon NRDAR webpage. Although a member of the CMO I am collocated in the Fairhope Field Office.

When I am away from the IT world, my family and I enjoy running, camping, and watching live sports events.

**James (Kevin) Chapman:** In October 2010, while a graduate student at Georgia Southern University, I was given the opportunity to join the Service as part of the Student Career Experience Program due to my work on the Camp Lawton Civil War Prison Archaeological Project. I was thrilled with the opportunity to help discover, document, and research Camp Lawton and to share that experience through public education and outreach. After graduating, I joined the DWH NRDAR CMO as the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Coordinator. I assist in the protection of

the archaeological, cultural, and historic resources of our nation while helping implement restoration projects in the Gulf Coast natural environment. Though stationed in the Atlanta Regional Office, I often travel throughout the Gulf to meet with project proponents, community members, and representatives of the various Indian Tribes that have aboriginal ties to the Gulf Coast.

Outside of work I remain active in conflict and plantation archaeological research in the southeastern U.S. I'm an avid reader, sports fan, and an amateur foodie.

**Colette Charbonneau:** I started my career in the federal government 24.5 years ago as a temporary employee with EPA which turned me to graduate school at the University of Missouri-Columbia and a cooperative student position with the Missouri Ecological Services field Office. My co-op student and graduate work were based in the Environmental Contaminants Program. Once converted to a permanent Service employee, I engaged in the NRDA world and I've not strayed far since. I did take a brief hiatus to coordinate development of the CCPs for Refuges in Region 3. This gave me incredible knowledge for NRDA restoration. The DWH oil spill was devastating to the environment, but it provided an opportunity for me to join the Region 4 team to begin restoring the natural resources that were injured by the spill. As the DWH Restoration Program Manager I coordinate the restoration efforts of the DOI agencies (FWS, NPS, and BLM) whose trust resources were injured. I am stationed in Denver, but spend a lot of my time in different cities along the Gulf. I'm thoroughly enjoying learning about an ecosystem that is new to me. The Gulf is an incredibly dynamic and not easily restored resource! When I'm not enjoying the warmth and seafood of the Gulf, you can find me cheering on my Green Bay Packers (I am a shareholder), knitting and spinning wool, or riding my quarter horse in the Colorado sunshine.

**Holly Herod:** May 2014 marks my 17th year working on endangered species issues for the federal government. I'm currently on a year-long detail to the CMO as the Endangered Species Act Coordinator and located in the Regional office in Atlanta. In this role I assist the project sponsors in developing their documentation to be in compliance with Endangered Species Act, Migratory

Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act (manatee only), and Executive Order 13112 (i.e., Invasive Species.) I provide coordination between sponsors and the Region 4 field offices (and Clear Lake, Texas) to ensure consultations under the relevant Acts are completed in a timely manner. I also work closely with National Marine Fisheries Service. I've enjoyed this detail for many reasons, primarily because I'm able to work cooperatively with great field office biologists to incorporate avoidance and minimization measures into the current DWH NRDA early restoration project descriptions and future projects proposed for early restoration. These measures are not only for listed species or migratory birds, but also for candidates and proposed species, proposed critical habitats, and migratory bird habitats, which are often not considered by project sponsors when conducting consultation and coordination with the Service.

**Denise Klimas:** I've been fortunate to have spent the last 22 years working as a biologist on ecological risk assessments and NRDA's for either the Service or NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration. Since coming back to the Service in 2010, I've worked in the DWH CMO. During this time, I've expanded my horizons beyond my biology background, and I've seen first-hand what it really takes to manage a case as large as the DWH NRDA. Although my duties have evolved over time, I'm currently the contracting officer's representative for several administrative contracts, and I work closely with our contracting officers to both monitor contract performance as well as review and process invoices. I'm also responsible for responding to NRDA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, assisting with the Administrative Record, and track sample storage.

I received my undergraduate degree in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Go Heels!), and my Masters in Physical Geography from Louisiana State University. When I'm not working, I'm busy being a mom to my two girls, an animal caretaker to my four cats and one dog, and a crazy gardener—just ask my husband about his back!

**Ashley Mills:** I've been with the Service for seven years: I started out in the National Wildlife Refuge System as a Refuge Management Specialist in Region 3. Prior to joining the Service, I received a Master's of Science degree from The

Ohio State University where my thesis research focused on migration stopover ecology of neotropical migrants in the southwestern Lake Erie Basin of northern Ohio. Currently, I am a Fish and Wildlife Biologist in the CMO. I enjoy a wide variety of duties including managing multiple contracts as a contracting officer's representative and as coordinator for numerous tasks in the assessment injury and restoration. Working with the many trustees of the NRDA and having the opportunity to be directly involved in efforts that focus on restoring the Gulf is a unique and fulfilling experience. Outside of work, I enjoy birding, gardening, reading, singing in my church choir, and spending time with my family, friends and several pets. Most exciting is that my husband and I are expecting our first child in late May!

**Robin Renn:** I'm the DOI NEPA Coordinator for the DWHNRDA, and have been a Service employee for 20 years. Before joining the Service, I worked for USDA APHIS and Texas A&M University in research and applied entomology. With the Service I worked for Region 6 in the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Assistance Office assisting other federal agencies (mostly the Army) on a reimbursable basis with their NEPA compliance. Ensuring NEPA compliance has been my main duty for most of my federal career and continues to be with the DWH restoration activities, both early and long-term restoration. When the Assistance Office in Region 6 was dissolved, I was detailed to Fairhope, Alabama during the spill in 2010 for many months before I was given the opportunity in spring 2011 to work permanently for the CMO. I've enjoyed the challenge of working on such a large, coordinated effort to restore natural resources. The most special thing to me, however, has been the friendships and work relationships forged since the spill began; they span the entire country. After working in the CMO office in Denver, my husband and I moved down to Fairhope last summer. All the travel down there made us fall in love with the place, and it's rooted me in the region where the restoration is actually taking place.

## The Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Case Management Office team:

photos, USFWS



Pam Rule



Gina Ballard



Kevin Chapman



Denise Klimas



Ashley Mills

**Nanciann Regalado:** I'm relatively new to the Service - this month marks my three-year anniversary. Before joining the Service I worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for over 10 years as the Public Affairs and Outreach Manager for the Everglades Restoration Program. While at the Corps, I believed strongly in the work I was doing - ensuring the public had adequate opportunities to engage in a meaningful way in our efforts to restore America's Everglades. Leaving the Everglades behind wasn't easy, but I knew the time had come to move on to another challenge, post DWH oil spill restoration of the Gulf of Mexico. I'm enormously thankful for the opportunity I've been given to work as the DOI Outreach and Public Affairs Coordinator for the DWH NRDA. The public has the right to be involved in decisions we make regarding Gulf of Mexico restoration. I'm glad I'm in a position to help them use that right. I'm located in the Regional office in Atlanta with a number of fellow CMO staff-members. When not working and traveling, my world revolves around my pack of rescued canines: Sophie, Casey, Gemini, and Tippy.

**Pam Rule:** This year I celebrate 20 years with the Service. During my time with the Service I've had the good fortune to work with Refuges, Ecological Services and now as a Program Analyst in the DWHCMO. For the past 3.5 years I've been assigned to the DWH spill response pulling together the cost documentation needed for reimbursement of the cost of the spill response. I will continue to work on the spill response side of DWH until the response is closed out. At the same time, I'm learning about and assisting with the complex financial side of the NRDAR case. This case is extremely interesting and gives me the opportunity to interact with the many federal and state agencies that are a part of the case.

### Deborah Warren:

Before working with the federal government, I was an educator for 12 years. I decided to embark on a career change once I married my husband who at the time was in the U.S. Air Force. I've been a federal government employee for 14 years with most of that time working for the Department of Defense. Having a degree in education helped me with my start as the Lead Provider working for the Child Development Center. My passion had always been working with kids. Once my husband and I moved to Germany, I entered the administrative assistance world. Since 2006, I've gone back and forth from secretarial to program coordinator positions. I've been with the DWH CMO since December 2012 as the Executive Assistant. As such, I'm responsible for all things administrative. I enjoy spending time with my family, and I also enjoy participating in community projects through the service organizations to which I belong.

**Susan Vaughn:** I've worked for the Service for almost 10 years. I've had the opportunity to work in several programs including Realty, Ecological Services, Budget and Administration, and most recently with the DWH CMO. I serve as a Budget Analyst for the office, and I'm responsible for preparing cost documentation packages for the Service to be included in the quarterly billings to



L to R: Colette Charbonneau, Debora McClain, Amy Wisco



L to R: Debra Warren, Kevin Reynolds, Nanciann Regalado

**BP:** When not working, I enjoy spending time with my husband, Damion, and my two children, Abby and Tyler.

**Amy Wisco:** I started my federal career as an intern with the Department of the Army on the Rock Island Arsenal in 2005. In 2007, I moved to Anchorage, Alaska to work on Forts Richardson and Wainwright. I was hired into the Service in 2009 to work in the Region 7 Budget and Finance Office. Having gained knowledge of spill response and NRDARs while working in Region 7, I was called upon to assist with the DWH spill response in 2010. I spent five weeks in Atlanta coordinating finance and contract matters. From there, I went back to Alaska and was given the opportunity to work as a supervisory Budget Analyst for Migratory Birds and State Programs. When Region 4 established the DWH NRDAR CMO, I was asked to take a Program Analyst position and was given the opportunity to relocate to Denver, Colorado, where I currently reside. I'm pursuing my Masters of Public Administration degree at the University of Colorado Denver, and plan to graduate fall 2015. In my free time, I enjoy scuba diving, hiking/being outdoors, and spending time with family and friends. ❖

# Photo Caption Contest

## Winner of March-April Creative Caption Photo:

*Cynthia  
Williams,  
Fisheries  
Program  
Supervisor for  
Management  
Assistance and  
Warm Springs  
Complex, with  
"FEED ME  
SEYMOUR!"*



*Milkweed pod with seeds, photo: USFWS*

In honor of  
Endangered  
Species Day,  
which was  
May 16, 2014,  
please make  
up a creative  
caption for this  
photo of a red  
wolf pup. Send  
your suggested  
caption to  
[Elsie\\_Davis@  
fws.gov](mailto:Elsie_Davis@fws.gov).  
The contest  
winner will be  
announced in  
the July-August  
issue.



*Red wolf pup, photo: B. Harrison/USFWS*



## Something You Didn't Know About Me

Scott Simmons hunting turkeys. Personal photo.

### Scott Simmons, Assistant Refuge Manager, Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

By Jennifer Strickland, External Affairs

Scott is an accomplished duck call maker and collector who was recently featured in a popular story by the Associated Press titled, "Handmade Duck Calls Attract a Following." He comes from a family of woodworkers and famous carvers, and was mentored by an experienced call maker in Memphis.

Working with domestic and exotic hardwoods, bone, antler and acrylics, Scott sees the duck call is a folk art piece that can be handed down from generation to generation. At the 2013 Grand National Call Making Competition, Scott was awarded First Place in the hand carved category, second Best of Show and the Chairman's Design Award. Find him online at [simmonscalls.com](http://simmonscalls.com).

Read the AP story at <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/handmade-duck-calls-attract-23604738> ❖



a custom duck call featuring a face and two resting ducks. Personal photo.



custom duck calls featuring the FWS shield, photo: Scott Simmons.

## What do you think?

What is your favorite season and why? Go to <http://bit.ly/EgritsPoll> to respond.

Answers to be published in July-August issue.