

Photo Contest Underway

The Friends of Noxubee Refuge Annual Amateur Nature Photography Contest is at the midway point. That means you still have plenty of time, and good weather, to visit Noxubee and take an award-winning photograph. A panel of professional photographers will judge wildlife and/or scenery photographed within the Refuge between the dates of September 16, 2010, and September 15, 2011. Photos are judged in two categories: Wildlife and Scenery. The two age groups for each category are Youth-under-16 and Adult.

Contest winners are announced and prizes awarded during the National Wildlife Week celebration held in October at the Noxubee Refuge Visitor Center. All entries are displayed for several weeks at the Refuge Visitor Center. Complete rules and forms are found on the Friends website at www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org or can be picked up at the Refuge Visitor Center.

2010 Photo Contest Winners Shown

The first place winners of the 2010 FoNR Annual Nature Photography Contest are shown. The complete list of winners is as follows:

	<i>Youth Scenery</i>	<i>Youth Wildlife</i>
1st	Mason Smith	Mason Smith
2nd	Warren Smith	Warren Smith
3rd	Pam Conquest	Jamie Anthony
HM	Jamie Anthony	Warren Smith
	<i>Adult Scenery</i>	<i>Adult Wildlife</i>
1st	Beth Graber	Bill Parker
2nd	Bill Parker	Loraine Walker
3rd	Julianna Persons	Nancy Brashier
HM	Julianna Persons	Bill Parker



Mason Smith - Bluff Lake Frozen Over



Mason Smith - Snowy Egret:
Nesting Colors



Beth Graber - Sunset



Bill Parker - Garter Snake

From the President

Spring is an excellent time to visit Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for hiking, picnicking, bird watching, fishing, etc. If you are not familiar with the Refuge just get your camera, load the family into the car and go about a dozen miles south of Starkville. Then stop by the Visitor Center on the south shore of Bluff Lake and talk to a refuge staff member or Friends of Noxubee Refuge (FoNR) volunteer. While at the VC, watch the 12-minute video which describes the history and attractions at the refuge. Pick up a map and some brochures, and I guarantee that you will have a great time. How do I know? See the answer below.

Thanks to Susan Brooks, our recently retired newsletter editor for her outstanding job, and to Gwen Cotton, our new editor, for accepting this position and publishing this, her first newsletter. If you haven't done so, please check out our new website where you can find plenty of useful information about activities at the Refuge and a schedule of upcoming events. These include our April membership program, fishing derby, and Saturdays at the Refuge activities. Thanks to Jacque Tisdale, Florence Box, and Nancy Blackwell for a job well done in upgrading our website.

If you are not a member of FoNR, please pick up a membership form and consider joining. For members there are many opportunities for volunteering for a variety of activities. Check at the main desk in the Visitor Center, or look at the newsletter and website for some of these opportunities.

Oh yes, the answer. Back in the early 1940s, just after Noxubee Refuge was established and the country was recovering from the recession and fighting WWII, on Sunday afternoons my parents often loaded my three younger sisters and me into our black 1939 Chevy and took us down to the Refuge to wade in the spillway. This was great fun, but for good reasons is no longer allowed. A little later, an uncle took me fishing, for the first time from a boat, in Bluff Lake, and I accidentally caught a fish. Ever since, I have regularly enjoyed visiting NNWR for a variety of activities. If you try it, I'm sure you will like it too. We look forward to seeing you at the Refuge soon.

Lawrence Croft

Proposed Changes to By-Laws

At the March meeting of the FoNR Board of Directors, the board approved a recommendation to revise the FoNR By-Laws regarding renewal of membership. Current by-laws specify that dues for renewal of membership are payable on the anniversary date of the original membership. The recommendation is to change to a process where all membership renewals are payable in the month of October.

All changes to the by-laws must be approved by the membership at a General or Special Membership Meeting. Changes must be presented in the newsletter at least 14 days before the meeting at which the vote is to take place. In order to meet these provisions of the by-laws, the board will submit the recommendation for a change in the membership renewal process to members for a vote at the June 2011 General Membership meeting.

Notice of Nomination Committee

The Nomination Committee members for the September FoNR election are:

Non-board members: Dr. Bob Fuller and Freddie Raspberry
Board members: Dr. Larry Box and Barbara Crawford.

The committee will select nominees for all officer positions and for the three board positions where members' terms end on Dec. 31, 2011.

General Membership Meeting

April 21, 2011, 6:30 p.m.

Tisdale Auditorium

Noxubee Visitor Center

The speaker at the April 21 general membership meeting of Friends of Noxubee Refuge will be Dr. Paul Hamel of Stoneville, MS. Dr. Hamel is a Research Wildlife Biologist for the USDA Forest Service at the Southern Hardwoods Laboratory in Stoneville. FoNR Vice President and program chair Dr. Frank Bonner says Dr. Hamel is internationally known for his work on the migration of warblers in the US, with special emphasis on their distribution and abundance in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. As chair of the Cerulean Warbler Technical Group, Dr. Hamel was the recipient of the 2008 Wings Across Americas award for international cooperation in conservation of birds, bats and butterflies. His talk is titled, "The Forgotten Cerulean Warblers of the MidSouth."

FoNR members and the public are invited to the program scheduled for 6:30 p.m. in the Tisdale Auditorium of the Noxubee Visitor Center. Refreshments and a social time will follow the meeting.

Morgan Hill Prairie Project Undertaken

The Blackbelt prairie is the most endangered ecosystem in Mississippi. Ninety-eight percent of the Blackbelt prairie has disappeared from the state. Prairie remnants do remain, such as the Osborn Prairie on 16th section land in Oktibbeha County.

While technically not part of the Blackbelt prairie, a portion of Noxubee Refuge is being transformed into a prairie ecosystem. Morgan Hill has changed from an open area used for hay production into an area supporting prairie plants. Over the years, several groups and individuals worked to maintain this area as a prairie and to supplement it with additional plantings of native grasses and forbs.

Recently, the Friends group presented a plan to the management of Noxubee Refuge to undertake a new restoration plan for the Morgan Hill area. Manager Henry Sansing and Refuge Biologist David Richardson agreed to support the effort. The FoNR board voted to continue with the demonstration project using a \$5,000 grant from TVA. FoNR is working with Daniel Coggin from Wildlife

Mississippi to plant native grasses, wildflowers and other forbs. Planting begins in April and will include little bluestem, Indian grass, black-eyed Susan, false sunflower, partridge pea, purple coneflower and greyheaded coneflower.

In preparation for planting, the Refuge staff has already burned the area. Fire has always been an integral part of maintaining prairie land whether as a natural occurrence or set deliberately as the Native Americans did. The staff will also rehabilitate some of the trails and build a new kiosk.

The Morgan Hill Prairie Demonstration Committee will also collect seed and propagules of other prairie plants to supplement the initial planting. The first planting concentrates on twenty four acres between the trails and around the overlook of Loakfoma Lake.

To succeed in restoring the Morgan Hill Prairie will require several years of work with a lot of commitment from members and volunteers. Members who are interested in becoming volunteers on this project should contact project chair Jim Taylor at JTaylor@pss.msstate.edu or President Lawrence Croft at wlcroft@bellsouth.net

Native Plant Garden Gets Spring Cleaning

In February, a crowd of volunteers gathered at the Noxubee Native Garden in front of the Noxubee Visitor Center to perform a variety of spring "sprucing-up" chores.

Volunteers pulled weeds, grass, and stray pine and hackberry trees from the garden. The parking lot provided free mulch of pine straw and bark to spread around the native plants. One group of volunteers cleaned the boardwalk of winter debris and cleared the entire garden of fallen

limbs. The downed tree limbs were transported to the Bird Sanctuary to provide cover near the bird feeders. Chair Jim Taylor expressed appreciation for the hard work of the volunteers that day as well as those who frequently come to work on their own.

Oral History Project Continues

Oral History Project Chair Jan Bryant recently announced that Sheldon Webster, who grew up on Noxubee Refuge, has joined the Friends' effort to collect oral histories of the area. Sheldon is the son of the late Burton Webster, long time manager of the Refuge. He is very familiar with the Refuge and the surrounding community. His knowledge of the area and the people who live there has increased the list of potential interviewees.

Jan Bryant recently interviewed Willie Belle Sykes, the granddaughter of Elmo Brown, an African-American landowner, who owned a store near what is now Loakfoma Lake. Sykes recalled several families who frequented the store or who lived nearby. She also remembered how one source of entertainment was to watch fish jump over the spillway!

For volunteers interested in working with the oral history project, please contact Jan Bryant, jcg34@msstate.edu, 323-2277.

Saturdays at the Refuge

The Friends assist with educational programs each first and third Saturday in the month. Check back often to see upcoming events. Programs are open to the general public and are free of charge unless noted otherwise. Call 662-323-5548 for more information or reservations.

April 2 - Bugs Day & Night- Visitor Center 3:30-9:00 pm
Join us for a buggy day and night of collecting and identifying.

April 16 - Canoe Day on Bluff Lake- Canoes, paddles and life vests are furnished for those who want to explore Bluff Lake by the slow and easy.

May 7 – Ladies, Bait Your Hook- Visitor Center 9:00 am - Noon Registration Required - Ladies of all ages who want to learn about and get involved in fishing will enjoy this informal

session on the various types of freshwater fishing. After the in-class session, participants will go outdoors to a fishing pond.

May 21 - Endangered Species Day- Visitor Center 9:00 am-
An informative presentation on the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker will be followed by a walk through an area of an active colony.

June 4 - 9th Annual Fishing Derby 8-10 am - Registration Required - The 9th annual fishing derby for children ages four through fifteen will be held at two fishing ponds stocked with catfish. Prizes will be awarded in two age categories and each registered child will receive a goody bag and a prize.

June 18 - Craig Pond Trail Walk - Dr. Ray Iglay will lead a walk on this recently established trail.

EAGLE UPDATE

The eaglet triplets are growing rapidly. Be sure to visit before the end of April to ensure they are still in the nest. For nest location information, stop off at the Visitor Center.



Photo by Lawrence Croft on 3/18/11

Friends of Noxubee Refuge is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, dedicated to conserving our natural resources through volunteer work and fund raising.

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JOIN FoNR TODAY!

Individual memberships start at only \$15.

2970 BLUFF LAKE ROAD
BROOKSVILLE, MS 39739

For a membership form or information about the Refuge, call (662)323-5548.

2011 GENERAL MEETING DATES

January 20, April 21, June 23, and September 22

www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org

Contributions to this newsletter were made by Frank Bonner, Florence Box, Larry Box, Janis Bryant, Lawrence Croft, Andrea Dunstan, Jim Taylor and Jacque Tisdale.