

In the Weeds

Notes from the Noxubee Native Garden

By Vera Taylor

Until recently, I was a yard gardener who mainly chose the plants to go in my yard because they were given to me, appropriated by getting cuttings from public places (I'm sure the bank doesn't mind that I got my start on purple heart from their bed.), and by dragging home all the 75% off distressed plants at our local box store and trying to resurrect them from their sad state. But recently that haphazard style of gardening has taken a turn, mostly likely because I let it slip that for me pulling weeds put me in a meditative Zen state. I was asked and accepted the post of being in charge of the Noxubee Native Garden. You know that they say fools rush in. All such similar sayings might describe my agreeing to take on this task. This is going to be not just a learning curve, but more like a corkscrew in terms of my knowledge of native plants.

Fortunately for me, I do enjoy the process of growing plants and learning about new species, so I'm going to dig my heels in and just go for it.

The first plant I have tried to get acquainted with is a rather "plain Jane" when it's first viewed, but it serves as a backbone plant in the garden particularly as a screening plant. This plant is the wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), an evergreen shrub or small tree. This plant's unprepossessing look may not lead you to believe it, but it has quite an interesting history. The wax myrtle, aka Southern bayberry, candleberry tree, held a very prominent place in ensuring early American colonists' homes did not offend their guests with terrible pet and cooking odors, or be bothered by pesky insects. They used the waxy berries to make scented candles, and even though not scientifically proven, the leaves and branches are

sworn by some to keep fleas and cockroaches at bay. The plant's leaves contain yellow and orange glands that produce an oil with a fragrant, possible insect deterrent, scent and the yellow can be used as a dye. Just make sure you know this may make your garment very flammable as the oils on the leaves if caught afire might cause this tree to do a pretty good imitation of Moses' burning bush. The wax myrtle is also a winter food supply for many migrating birds and some small mammals. It is also a host plant for a few caterpillars, one of which is the most toxic stinging caterpillar in the United States, the Southern Flannel moth. It seems you just can't judge a plant by its leaves.

I make no guarantees that everything you've read is scientifically accurate, and I can only reveal my sources' initials which are "w.w.w." If you have any information to add, you can add it to the FoNR website or facebook page. I'm always a willing learner. Keep an eye out for a Noxubee Native Garden work day. Bring your yoga mat or stool and be prepared to join me for a morning of blissful meditation. When you see me, I'll be in the weeds both literally and figuratively.



Friends members Florence Box, Larry Box, Linda Wells, Wayne Wells, Carmen Walker, Kara Roberts, Susan Hamilton, Tom Gregory, Vera Taylor, Jim Taylor, and Maroon Volunteers Katrina Hutchingson, Ravin Netherton and Derek Johnson contributed 55 volunteer hours, credited to the Refuge, at the workday.

From The President– James Taylor



To all the members of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge, I just want to say thanks for your support of our organization. We have accomplished much this spring, and we could have not done it without the help of our volunteers. There was

a great turnout for the Noxubee Native Garden Spring Spruce Up. We also appreciate the additional help from the MSU Maroon Volunteers. Canoe days have been very popular, and we had another successful Youth Fishing Derby which is always one of our favorite activities. The Board

of Directors had its first meeting with the new project manager, Steve Reagan, and we had a good discussion about how we can partnership with each other to make FoNR volunteering a fun experience while still getting work done to enhance the public's visits to the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. We will be working closely with Steve and the other staff at the Refuge to review our programs on education, infrastructure, wildlife projects, trail maintenance, and other things that will help the Refuge. It is very important for us as members to support the Refuge in this time of budget cuts to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Check the Friends website for upcoming events. We hope to see you at the next general meeting on June 21. If you receive this newsletter and are not a member yet, we invite you to the meeting and hope you will consider joining our group.

Refuge Manager Steve Reagan's Reflections

At the time I am writing this, it is predawn, the sun has not yet risen and only just now are sounds associated with morning starting to awake. The calls from the bronze frogs and splashes from fish along the edge of Bluff Lake now begin to give way to those sounds of the Northern Cardinal, Mockingbird, and Eastern Phoebe. There is starting to be just enough light to see Cattle and Great Egrets flying just a foot or two above the water's surface as they search for their early morning fishing spot. Just now the call of the Canada Goose echoes over the lake and although I know the rest of my day will be much different than now, I just love every minute of this job!

I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome during my first few weeks

here at the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Although it will take some time for my wife Janet and me to get and feel fully settled in our new surroundings, I can think of no better place I would rather be than right here, right now.



Each day I learn a little more about the local area and continue to explore and discover new wonders throughout the Refuge. I am so very much impressed by all the great work that has already been done on the Refuge with help of Friends and volunteers, and I see so much more we can do together. I am very excited about this great opportunity to serve the public and work with the Friends of Noxubee Refuge to do what we each feel is not only a life's calling, but what is needed for the local community, the environment and wildlife.

Membership Notes

Please take time to look at the mailing label on your newsletter envelope. If you have moved, or had a number change, let me know soon. You may e-mail jcb34@msstate.edu or call 323-2277.

Jan Bryant, Membership Chair

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. Outdoor programs are "weather permitting." Call 662-323-5548 for more information or reservations.

June 2 – Canoeing on Bluff Lake - Canoes, life jackets and paddles will be available to take out on Bluff Lake at no charge. This is a great opportunity to explore canoeing, the rookery and the cypress stands. Canoes will be launched on the west side of Bluff Lake near the Cypress Cove Boardwalk. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

June 16 - Ladies Bait Your Hook- Visitor Center, 9:00 a.m. – 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, the class will move to a stocked fishing pond.

July 21 - Fly-tying on the Refuge - Visitor Center, 9-11 a.m. - Join us for a morning of fly-tying basics with local fly-fisherman and -tyer, Ray Iglay. We will cover essential techniques for tying multiple types of flies and explore some common fly patterns for bream, bass, and catfish. Fly-tying materials will be provided and participants can keep all of their flies from the morning. However, participants are welcome to bring their own supplies as well. The session will also review creating new patterns to match

August 4 – Guided trail walk - Wilderness Trail - Led by Steve Reagan. Meet at trailhead – 9:00 a.m.

August 18 – Night Prowl - Reservations Required - Visitor Center 7:30 p.m. - Andrea Dunstan - Visit the Refuge after hours to see and hear some of the nocturnal wildlife. Learn fun facts about owls, hear their calls, and maybe even see alligators' eyes and other nocturnal creatures' eyes glow in the night

September 1 - Buggy Day and Night – John Guyton (bring sack dinner) Needing insect collections? Great time to start one. Check with Refuge for further details.

September 15 - Guided trail walk - Scattertown Trail – Led by Tom Gregory. Meet at Bevils Hill Church parking area 10:00 a.m.

October 6 – Celebrate Refuge Week at Family Fun Day

October 20 - Guided trail walk - Douglas Bluff Trail – Led by Vera Taylor. Meet at Picnic Area Kiosk 9:00 a.m.

November 3 – Guided trail walk - Beaver Dam Trail – Led by Lawrence Croft. Meet at Boat Launch Ramp area 9:00 a.m.

November 17 - Guided trail walk - Watson Trail – Led by Frank Bonner. Meet at Visitor Center parking area 9:00 a.m.

December 1 – Nature Crafts

Something New for Saturdays at the Refuge

FONR is offering five guided trail walks this year. These walks will be for anyone who wants to get out but is reluctant to go alone or would be more comfortable with a group. Please give us your feedback, let us know how it goes for you and if you would be willing to lead a future walk.

June General Meeting June 28, 6:30 p.m.

Tisdale Auditorium, Noxubee Visitor Center

"Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Wildlife Mitigation Program"

The speaker for the June 28st meeting will be Tim Brooks. Tim is a registered forester and certified wildlife biologist and currently works for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The program will give a brief account of the history, authorization, multi-agency partnering, initial development and intensive management strategies being implemented on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Wildlife Mitigation Lands. Wildlife management, mitigation monitoring procedures and techniques will be discussed including endangered species, bald eagle restoration program, neotropical songbird inventories, midwinter waterfowl counts, wading bird rookery surveys, and spotlight counts for white-tailed deer. Routine wildlife management techniques such as food plot development, supplemental nest boxes for wood ducks and songbirds, waterfowl management, prescribed burning and forest management will also be discussed.

The public is invited to the program and the social time that will follow the meeting.

(The meeting has been changed from June 21 to the 28th because of a scheduling conflict.)



An alligator swimming past the Visitor Center deck with a goose presents a great photo opportunity!
Picture by Andrea Dunstan

Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers

by Harry R. Phillips



Beard tongue. Maypops. Butterfly weed. Trumpet vine. Queen Ann's lace. Black-eyed Susan. Wild flowers are making their annual show along Mississippi roadsides. **Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers; An Easy to Use Guide for All Gardeners** encourages the use of these beauties in home gardens. The overview on cultivating and propagating wild flowers emphasizes the fundamentals of gardening with native plant material. The author, Harry Phillips, is the former curator of the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. He encourages wild flower gardeners to propagate native species rather than collecting the plants. Though a North Carolina publication, the seventy-five species featured are also found in Mississippi.

Information for each species follows an outline which includes brief, readable sections on description, fruit and seed, seed collection, propagation, cultivation, uses in the garden and landscape, related species, and production notes. The directions are easy to read and non-intimidating for a beginning wild flower gardener. Though online information on wild flowers is readily available, **Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers** is a book that will be used again and again. A real challenge would be to locate and propagate each of the seventy-five species described. Spiderwort. Moneywort. White wild indigo. Blue-eyed grass. Meadow beauty.....

Book Review Submitted by Florence Box

Wildlife Factoids

There are 84 species of freshwater mussels (Unionidae) in Mississippi of which 29 can be found on Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Refuge.

In 1975, there was such concern for the decrease in double-crested cormorants, presumably from affects of DDT, that artificial nest structures were erected in Illinois and Minnesota. Today, the cormorant is widely seen as a nuisance species especially within areas of commercial and recreational fisheries of the northeast and southeastern United States.



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

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For a membership form or information
about the Refuge, call 662-323-5578 or visit
<http://www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org/>.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Gwen Cotton, cottongwen@aol.com

2012 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP DATES

June 28 and September 20

Contributions to this newsletter were made by

J. Taylor, F. Box, A. Dunstan, V. Taylor, G. Hagood, D. Richardson, G. Cotton, J. Bryant and S. Reagan