

Meet the New Artist in Residence, Robin Whitfield



Meet the new Artist-in-Residence, Robin Whitfield. She will live and work on the Refuge for three weeks in November. She stands in front of a palette of colors made from nature. For example, the yellow with the egret was made from spring pollen and the green with the hummingbird is from poke leaves. We are looking forward to having her talent enrich the Refuge experience.

Annual National Wildlife Refuge Celebration (Family Fun Day)



This year's celebration is scheduled on September 27, which is a bit earlier than usual in order to cut down on conflicts. Save the date, bring the kids and grandkids, enjoy the activities, and maybe even learn something. Winners of the photo contest will be announced. You might be in for a surprise this year. Come on out and enjoy the day! All events are free. Here are some past years' pictures.



From the FONR President– Larry Box



Now is an ideal time to visit Noxubee Refuge. Lake water levels have been lowered as a result of the planned summer drawdown. This has created a vast area of moist soil habitat which is being utilized by numerous shore birds and wading birds. Of particular interest is a large group of white pelicans and three roseate spoonbills. In addition, the low water level has brought the alligators to the deeper water near the Bluff Lake levee. I encourage you to take a late afternoon drive to the Refuge, observe all of the wildlife activity, and then complete the evening by watching a beautiful sunset over Bluff Lake.

Friends of Noxubee members are currently involved in several projects including planning for Refuge Day and developing a portion of a Barn Quilt Trail. Refuge Day is September 27th and is a fun filled day for the entire family. Numerous “hands-on” stations will feature wildlife, nature, and outdoor activities. As part of the day’s activities, five nature themed barn quilt squares will be unveiled. The largest, an eight foot by eight foot replica of a quilt square of an eagle will be installed at the south end of Oktoc Road. Others will be near the visitor center and at the Doyle Arm canoe launch site.

There are other Friends and Refuge events scheduled for coming days. Check elsewhere in this newsletter and on the website for details. And remember, Friends of Noxubee Refuge provides an opportunity for becoming actively involved in activities at the Refuge. Invite someone to join. Both of you will be happy you did.

Refuge Manager Steve Reagan’s Reflections



More than most fall seasons, this upcoming season promises to be one of transition and challenge for the Refuge staff. A positive challenge includes the release of Noxubee’s new 15-year management plan for public review. We are looking forward to receiving feedback on this draft Comprehensive Conservation

Plan and talking with those who choose to join us during our public meetings in late September and early October. Once completed, this document and the attached step-down plans will serve as a guide for continuing the Refuge’s restoration for the benefit of wildlife; a work that originally started in 1935. In the meantime, the Refuge is dealing with its day-to-day operational challenges. What is hoped are only short-term challenges, the Refuge continues to be impacted by reductions in staffing and budgets. Since the publishing of the previous 15-year plan in 2004, the Refuge’s 16 member staff has been reduced to nine members. As with any organization, numerous staff members have retired or transferred; however, regional and national workforce management within the National Wildlife Refuge System has forced all vacant staff positions to be abolished from the Refuge’s organizational chart. Budgets, calculated based on staffing levels, are therefore seeing similar reductions. Keeping up with the daily work demands is becoming increasingly difficult. It is truly the ongoing Friends and volunteer support that allows the Refuge to successfully continue offering many of its programs. We are thankful for this support, and I challenge each of you continue to find ways to support the Refuge, the programs you enjoy and our native wildlife.

Friends Academy 7 – Wow! What an Experience



Thank you for the opportunity to represent Friends of Noxubee Refuge at Friends Academy 7 held the first week of August at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) on the banks of the Potomac River near Shepherdstown, WV. The campus in itself was breath-taking, but the week spent with

our national Friends coordinator Joanna Webb, area Friends coordinators, key USFWS personnel, wildlife refuge leadership and 22 other “friends” from across the country (Alaska to New Mexico, Washington to Florida) representing their refuges Friends groups, was a once in a lifetime experience. Our week consisted of a unique blend of training for increasing the effectiveness of local organizations partnership with local refuges and in strengthening our Friends group’s core management.

A highlight of the week was the joint sessions and evening discussions we had with the 22 wildlife refuge managers (also

from many different states there for training) and their leadership which gave us a much clearer perspective of their jobs and responsibilities. Presentations on the Federal budget process and how legislation moves through Congress were eyeopeners. Not to dwell, but with 562 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts (located in every U.S. state and territory), the Refuge System is the largest network of lands and waters in the world (150 million acres) dedicated first and foremost to wildlife conservation. Yet we discovered that the budget for U.S. military bands is larger than that of the Refuge System.

Lastly, the long days and into the night group discussions and fellowship) sent us home with many new ideas, skills and most importantly new “Friends” from a diverse array of refuge Friends groups that we can now call upon to share projects, experiences, ideas, problems, etc. as we now have our own FA7 Facebook group.

I look forward to sharing with Friends of Noxubee Refuge the experiences, knowledge and information gained from Friends Academy 7, and I challenge each of us to become more active as Friends members and Refuge Service volunteers.

Submitted by Wayne Wells

General Membership Meeting
September 18 - 6:30 p.m.

Tisdale Auditorium
Noxubee Visitor Center

September 18, Program Announced

Meet the Refuge Staff

The next quarterly Friends meeting will be September 18th at 6:30 p.m. in the visitor center. There are several new Refuge staff members, and we felt this is a good time to have a program featuring the changes. All staff members will be introduced and will present brief description of his or her job responsibilities. Make plans to attend, learn about the work at the Refuge, and meet the people who do the work.

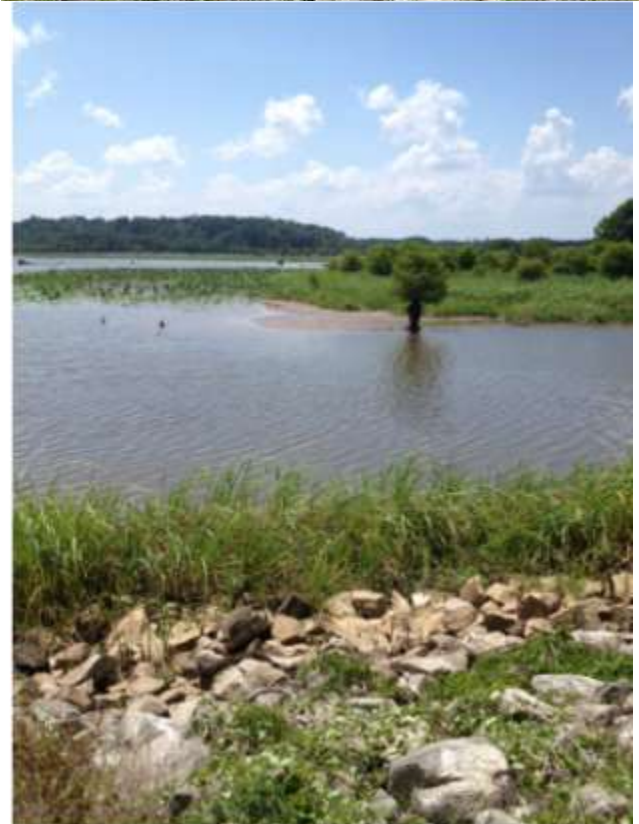
The quarterly meeting will be in the Tisdale Auditorium of the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting is open to the public, and there is no charge. Light refreshments and a social time will follow the presentation.



While some people did buy their t-shirts at the July Canoe Day, shirts are available for everyone in the Nature Store at the Visitor Center. You can buy a shirt even though you did not canoe Bluff Lake, who would know? Of course you're invited to come out to the next Canoe Day and make it true. Watch for the announcement of the date. Proceeds help defray the cost of Canoe Day and contribute to other Friends activities in support of Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Wildlife Refuge.

Summer Pool Benefits Wildlife

Each summer Bluff and Loakfoma lakes are drawn down to low levels, allowing vegetation to grow around edges of the lakes. Wading birds including wood storks use the extensive mud flats to feed, and when the lakes return to normal levels in the fall, the vegetation is then available for wintering waterfowl. Along with those benefits, the low water level allows the spraying of herbicide (minimal to no toxicity to aquatic environments) to control American water lotus, white water lily and other aquatic plants. If not controlled, the lakes will be eventually be covered completely and difficult to navigate. With the current low lake levels, boating can be difficult, but fishing remains open. The water will be slowly brought back up to full pool levels starting on October 1.



Summer drawn-down of Bluff Lake exposes lotus and sand bars. Levels will return to full pool in the fall, hopefully with fewer lotus plants. Spraying is currently underway.

Barn Quilts Coming to Noxubee

Work is under way to place five (5) barn quilts around the Refuge as part of the Starkville Area Arts Council Barn Quilt Trail. These quilts will be "unveiled" September 27, during the Refuge Week Activities. Look at these pictures and try to guess what's coming.



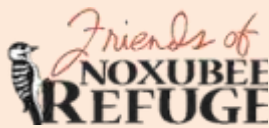
New Membership Year

A new membership year for the Friends of Noxubee Refuge (FoNR) officially begins in October. If you are already a member and are on our e-mail distribution list, you'll receive an e-mail reminder that it's time to renew. Otherwise, current members will receive notice by mail. (Last year we were late getting out notices so you may not have renewed last year until January even though it was for the year beginning in October.) With continuing federal budget cuts for our Refuge programs, support through the Friends' organization is more vital than ever. Please consider renewing your membership in October and also invite a friend to join. If you are not already a member of FoNR, membership forms are available on the Friends' website (<http://www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org>) or at the Visitor Center. If you have questions, you may contact the membership chair, Anna Marie Rasberry at anna_rasberry@yahoo.com or by phone at 662-722-0990.

Submitted by Anna Marie Rasberry

Nominations Committee Report

FoNR members will elect two members of the Board for FoNR during the September meeting. The 2014 nominations committee is Linda Wells, Gale Hagood and chair Jacque Tisdale. The committee recommends Tom Gregory and Wayne Wells for reelection to two (2) years as Board members. Additional nominations will be accepted during the election process.



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For a membership form or information about the Refuge, call 662-323-5548, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofNoxubeeRefuge>, or <http://www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org>.

2014 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP DATES

September 18

Contributions to this newsletter were made by L. Box, F. Box, S. Reagan, A. Dunstan, J. Tisdale, A. Rasberry, W. Wells and G. Cotton