

Stumped

Webster's sixth definition of "stumped" states, "informal, to puzzle: baffle." Apparently, this term arose from the difficulty farmers had plowing and hitting a stump. This expression certainly seems appropriate.

Many stumps are uncovered when the water in the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee's Bluff Lake is drawn down every summer. I understand this is done to help the wading birds, such as wood storks, find food on the exposed mud flats. The growth of vegetation provides food for wintering waterfowl when the water level returns to normal. The low water also allows for various improvements to be made such as the spraying of aquatic plants that would eventually completely cover the lake. However, the large number of stumps that are exposed on the bottom does puzzle me some. I read up on why the original stumps from before the lake was ever built, in 1938, are still there. It seems that wood must have three things to decay or to rot away.

First, the stumps are cypress which hardly rots anyway, but wood rots mainly because of what is known as the brown wood rot fungi which actually eats wood by making an enzyme that dissolves wood cells. This fungus will need oxygen, warm temperature and a little moisture to do its dirty work. Lake bottoms have too little oxygen and way too much moisture; so, the cypress stumps are still here. However, I know of one kind of stump in the open that does not seem to ever rot, and that is fat lighter heart pine. I found out the hard way just how tough it can be.

Back in my high school days, I would drive a tractor and bush hog pastures and fields for the farmers in the area. One day while bush hogging waist high broom sedge I ran the farmer's big Ford tractor onto a fat lighter pine stump. It was just high enough so the tractor went about halfway over before the stump got stuck up in a little crevice in the under carriage. As I tried to backup, it soon became apparent that all four wheels were in the air. That tractor was perfectly balanced on that fat lighter pine stump and was not going anywhere. That

tractor was perfectly balanced on that fat lighter pine stump and was not going anywhere. People, let me tell you, I was literally the sixth definition of "stumped." No amount of leaning, jumping or anything made any difference. I even spun it around, and that blasted stump would not break, bend or be mutilated. That stump had no rot or decay, had roots a mile deep, and was determined to stay intact. Nothing to do for it but to make the long walk back and try to explain to the farmer my peculiar problem.

The farmer, several neighboring farmers and I finally, after trying several different things and saying several different words, borrowed a big Massey-Ferguson tractor and used the lift to detach the bush hog and raise the ford tractor enough to move it off the stump. No, pulling it with a chain did not work. (Did I mention the roots a mile deep?) Neither the tractor nor the stump was damaged at all, and I bet that stump is still there.

Next time you look at the bottom of Bluff Lake, don't be "stumped" by all the stumps, just be glad you don't have to drive a tractor over them because you then might become "stumped on a stump."

Submitted by Tom Gregory

2015 Wildlife Outdoor Learning Festival

The WOLF event in September brought about 400 people to the Refuge. They participated in various events, checked out all the interesting vendors, ate hotdogs, and listened to the Bluegrass music. Thanks to all who attended and all the volunteers who helped make this annual event a success!



From the FONR President- Larry Box



Two years ago when I began my second term as president of FoNR, I did not foresee the changes that were forthcoming. In the spring of that year, the Fish and Wildlife Service distributed a revised set of instructions for developing a Friends Partnership Agreement which required all Friends

groups to develop a new agreement with the Service. While the new instructions contained very little new information, it brought all existing regulations regarding Friends groups into one document. Most Friends groups, including FoNR, learned there were some previously unknown regulations that were not being followed.

With the new instructions in hand, the FoNR board began a series of meetings to develop a new agreement that met all of the guidelines. This resulted in the following changes: an insurance policy for liability and property coverage for FoNR; a volunteer form which provides members tort liability protection; an understanding that Refuge employees may not serve as sales clerks in the Nature Store; and depending on the nature of an activity, classification of volunteers as either a FoNR Volunteer or a Fish and Wildlife Volunteer. This classification is necessary in order to correctly determine the number of volunteer hours donated to the Refuge. It also determines whether a volunteer is covered under the FoNR insurance or Fish and Wildlife coverage.

During this same time period, the number of active Friends members was in a decline due to age and health issues. This prompted the Friends board to schedule a Fish and Wildlife Service-led three day Mentoring Workshop. The goals and objectives developed during the workshop have resulted in a revitalization of our Friends group. FoNR is now experiencing a growth in membership, an increase in the number of actively participating members, and an increase in financial support of FoNR. It has also been a time when FoNR has provided significant financial support to the Refuge. Major funding items include: Wi-Fi coverage for Refuge interns, matching funds for the Rookery Cam 360, funding for a part time volunteer coordinator, and purchase of insurance for FoNR.

As my time as president nears an end, I give a special thank you to Project Leader Steve Reagan, Public Use Specialist Andrea Dunstan, FoNR officers, and the FoNR board. It has been a rewarding time and as we reflect on the past two years, we know a lot was accomplished.

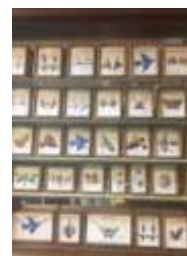
Beginning in January 2016, a new slate of officers led by President Bob Fuller will direct FoNR activities. I am sure they will lead FoNR to new heights.

Refuge Manager Steve Reagan's Reflections



Autumn is the time between summer and winter when the life generated during summer begins to get realized and the changes that happened during the year are most noticeable. For visitors of the Refuge, there have been several noticeable changes including the initiation of the Refuge's entrance pass and new closed gates at the ends of

Section Line, Williams and Robertson roads. The intent of the changes are to help the Refuge's wildlife and wildlife viewers by limiting pass-through traffic volumes, encouraging wildlife use along roadways, increasing the effectiveness of Refuge law enforcement, and targeting funds for public use facilities including maintenance of boardwalks, trails, roads, signs and buildings. These and other positive actions are strategies outlined in the recently approved Refuge Comprehensive Conservation, Habitat Management and Visitor Services Plans. The Refuge's staff of ten employees continues to work hard toward meeting all of its habitat management objectives while also supporting compatible public uses. Many visitors are interested in hearing how the entrance fee is going. Being that this is a new program, daily compliance is wide-ranging from a low of 17% to a high of 67% on any particular day. My observations suggest that hunters are generally in tune with yearly modifications and adjustments and are generally complying while the Refuge's wildlife viewers are not. But, the wildlife viewers that are complying seem supportive and use the daily fee envelopes to share support for the Refuge. Since October, the funding being generated is more than \$1,000 weekly. The money collected is being deposited within the Federal Treasury, and 80% of the total amount will become available for the first time after the New Year. One of our first planned uses for some of this money along with the \$7,800 donation from Friends of Noxubee Refuge will be to hire a temporary employee to help coordinate volunteers. More than a third (600-900 hours) of each month's efforts on the Refuge is occurring through volunteers. Again, I deeply appreciate all the help from the Refuge's Friends and volunteers. Thank you!



Pictures by D. Anthony

December Sale

The Nature Store is having a 20%-off sale during December on books and bamboo jewelry. These will make great Christmas presents and your purchase will benefit the Refuge. WIN-WIN!



Know What This Is?

This is the base for the camera that will be installed in Bluff Lake. The Rookery Cam 360 project will provide a high resolution camera for coverage of the egret rookery and other interesting sights in the lake. The camera will be mounted to a tall pole which will be attached to the above pictured base.

Submitted by L. Box

OCTOBER'S BEHIND THE SCENES EVENT

(Editor Note: A perk of being a Friends member is an invitation to the Behind-the-Scenes events. This is a report on the October 10 adventure.)

Fortunately all participants in the latest Behind the Scenes Event, a trek across the dry lake bed to the cattle egret rookery, made it back in one piece and alive. It was quite the adventure. The day began with a sighting of a baby alligator sunning at the mouth of a den while the onlookers stood observing with their feet ready to flee if the roar of a nearby adult was heard coming in defense of the baby. Thank goodness the roar was never heard. The walk continued with the sighting of plants, flowers, and grasses that are seldom seen due to the water coverage most of the year. Also uncovered was a massive cypress stump that had stood for generations before the lake was built. But the most harrowing part of the trip was crossing the treacherous "quick mud bog." Most crossed safely, but there were a few that fell prey to the sucking mud. Only with the help of their fellow adventurers did they live to tell the tale of almost being swallowed up by Bluff Lake. Seriously it was great fun, and the only danger was laughing until my side split over the "quick mud bog." Join us next time. You never know how the adventure will unfold.

Submitted by V. Taylor

General Membership Meeting December 3 - 6:30 p.m. Tisdale Auditorium Noxubee Visitor Center

Dr. Steven Reagan will share his experiences in working with bears for almost 15 years including the American black bears, grizzly bears and the federally listed Louisiana black bear. Attendees will be treated to unique videos showing interactions between individual bears and bears being captured as part of research projects.

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.

2016 FoNR Officers and Directors

The following individuals have been elected to serve a two year term beginning January 2016

President	Bob Fuller
Vice president	Joe Mulrooney
Secretary	Vera Taylor
Treasurer	Anna Marie Raspberry
Past President	Larry Box
Board members	Crayton Coleman
	Alexa Hutchens
	Gerald McKibben

The following individuals will begin serving the second year of their two year term beginning January 2016

Board Members	Tom Gregory
	Kara Roberts
	Wayne Wells



Annual Photography Contest – 2015 Winners



First Place Adult - Kara Roberts



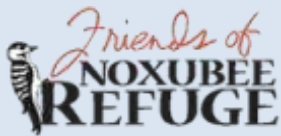
Second Place Adult - Susan Kinsey



Second Place Youth – Parker McMullen



First Place Youth - Katherine Dunstan



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

OFFICERS

President, Larry Box
Vice President, John Guyton
Secretary, Vera Taylor
Treasurer, Anna Marie Rasberry

REFUGE LIASIONS

Andrea Dunstan
Steve Reagan

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Florence Box
Crayton Coleman
Gwen Cotton
Barbara Crawford
Tom Gregory
Ray Inglay
Margaret McMullen
Jim Taylor
Wayne Wells

Contributions to this newsletter were made by L. Box, F. Box, S. Reagan, T. Gregory, D. Anthony, V. Taylor, A. Dunstan, A. Rasberry, and G. Cotton

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Gwen Cotton, cottongwen@aol.com

JOIN FOUR TODAY!

Individual yearly memberships start at only \$15.

13723 BLUFF LAKE ROAD
Brooksville, MS 39739

2015 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DATES

3-December

FriendsofNoxubeeRefuge@gmail.com

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>.