

Behind the Scenes with Artist in Residence, Robin Whitfield



Whitfield Leads Friends on Art Exploration

Artist in Residence, Robin Whitfield of Grenada, explored Noxubee Refuge for three weeks during November, creating paintings as a result of hours spent tramping through the woods. On November 22, twenty members of Friends joined Whitfield to enjoy viewing a display of art works inspired by the natural beauty of Noxubee. After visiting the temporary gallery and hearing a brief explanation about her work, Whitfield led the participants on a walk in the woods. Members of Friends collected plants, leaves, moss, dirt, sticks, and other natural and organic material to create their own works of art. The Artist in Residence program is a cooperative effort which includes Mississippi State University Art Department, Starkville Area Arts Council, Noxubee Wildlife Refuge, and Friends of Noxubee.



Photo by F. Box

Volunteers Bob Bemis and Linda McClain are constructing kiosk at the picnic area.



Photo by L. Croft

Lawrence Croft sent this photo with two mature eagles in the nest tree area. He observed from about 3:00 p.m. until about 4:45 p.m. while the eagles took turns sitting low in the nest, sometimes with their head visible and sometimes so low that the head was not visible. He thought they are probably incubating some eggs and asked that other folks who are interested in eagles will help us either confirm that or disprove it. Let us know your opinions.

By-Laws Changes for Vote at January Meeting

Changes to the By-Laws will be considered at the January 15, 2015 General Membership Meeting for discussion and vote. The following is a list of major changes; there were also a few minor changes to clarify language, operation, etc. A complete document with all noted changes is available on the Friends website (www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org) or by hard copy at the Refuge office.

Purpose –

Added a statement that the Friends' organization is governed not only by the By-Laws and IRS guidelines, but also by other agreements such as recent "Friends Partnership Agreement" and "Friends Supplemental Partnership Agreement – Use of Service Property."

(Continued on Page 2)

From the FONR President- Larry Box



January is a time for new beginnings. A time to reflect on the past, make adjustments, make resolutions, and make plans for improvements. Such is the case with Friends of Noxubee. Over the past several years the number of active members of FoNR has declined due to age and health issues. Currently the same core group of members is called upon to conduct all events and

activities. To address this issue, a day-long board of directors retreat was held in late October. All current and proposed projects were discussed, evaluated, and ranked. This was done in order to establish the direction/goals for FoNR's future. As a result of the retreat, the board also applied for a two day mentoring site visit offered by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The site visit is designed to grow membership and revitalize local friends groups. Selection of workshop sites is competitive in nature so it will be several weeks before we know if FoNR has been selected as a site. Being selected will be a big help to the board as we work to grow membership and participation in FoNR.

Also at the retreat, the board worked on revisions to the by-laws. Look elsewhere in the newsletter for specifics about the proposed changes. The by-laws require all changes be approved at a general membership meeting. The next general membership meeting is January 15, 2015, and the proposed changes will be included in the meeting agenda.

Being involved in FoNR is an enjoyable and satisfying experience. If your current involvement is paying dues and reading the newsletter, I encourage you to become more active. Opportunities abound such as working in the visitor center, helping children at the fishing derby, assisting at canoe day, assisting at Refuge Day, meeting with the artist in residence, and enjoying the members only behind the scenes events. If you are interested in becoming an active Friends member, call me at 662-323-6895. I will be happy to answer questions you may have.

(By-Laws' Changes Continued from Page 1)

(These latter two agreements were required of all Friends' organizations within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and outline what both Friends and Refuges could and could not do in support of each other.) These latter two agreements were required of all Friends' organizations within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and outline what both Friends and Refuges could and could not do in support of each other.

Financial –

Previously needed two officers' signatures on all checks; changed to need only one signature of either Treasurer or President.

Membership –

Changed eligibility of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees from being non-voting members to being voting members by paying membership dues.

Meetings –

Changed quarterly General Membership Meetings from third Thursday of January, April, June, and September to first Thursday of March, June, September, and December.

Changed Board of Directors meetings to coincide with above General Membership Meeting months (with additional months' meetings also being on the first Thursday).

Refuge Manager Steve Reagan's Reflections



Now that we have entered January, the Sun rises just a little earlier and sets a little later each day. Given the Refuge's workload, every extra minute will help us toward completing this year's tasks. As the year progresses, the Refuge's new Comprehensive Conservation Plan and associated step-down plans will be approved

and begin to get implemented. Red-cockaded woodpeckers, forest breeding birds and waterfowl will continue to be major management focuses, with the new plans providing a clear understanding of what type of management is needed and where.

The new plans also discuss changes that will be occurring within the Refuge's public use programs. Anglers will see some new year-round fishing opportunities. Disabled hunters, not just mobility impaired hunters, will be offered facilitated opportunities to hunt more areas within Refuge. Deer hunters will gain more hunting opportunities throughout the state season. For non-hunters, the Refuge is expanding its environmental education zone with the creation of a Connecting People with Nature area where people of all ages and abilities will be able to learn more about the Refuge's natural resources.

These new plans also address some of the new realities of reduced staff and budget. Trails, roads and other facilities located outside the Connecting People with Nature area may receive reduced maintenance. Access routes into the Refuge will change with the north and south ends of Dummy Line Road becoming the primary routes through the Refuge's southern unit. The Refuge will likely begin introducing a general access fee as part of the existing fee program so we can continue to provide a quality experience for visitors. A total of 80% of the money generated from the fees will return to the Refuge for supporting our public use programs. This money would help the staff and volunteers conduct projects such as improving existing trails, maintaining existing facilities, updating educational materials, and establishing new trails and roadside parking areas.

We'll keep you updated as progress is made throughout the year. I encourage you to stay involved as it is your active support for the Refuge that makes a difference every day.

Board of Directors –

Board makeup changed from being no more than 14 to no more than 15 with its members being: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Immediate Past President, Nature Store Chair, Volunteer Coordinator, Publications Chair, Membership Chair, and up to 6 Directors-at-Large. (The previous makeup of 14: included Newsletter Editor and Webmaster, now under Publication Committee Chair; did not include Publication Chair or Membership Chair; included only 5 Directors-at-Large.) Elected terms begin in January unless filling an unexpired term.

Amendments to By-Laws –

Previously amendments had to be proposed by at least 10 members and presented in writing to Board of Directors. Changed so that amendment(s) could come from Board of Directors OR 10 members.

Submitted by A. Rasberry

General Membership Meeting
January 15 - 6:30 p.m.
Tisdale Auditorium
Noxubee Visitor Center

January 15, Program Announced

Dr. Don Jackson's Perspective on Fisheries, Local and Afar

Dr. Jackson has a spiritual and tangible association with the arteries of continents. His tracks through mud have followed him from Arkansas to some of the most remote places on the planet. He has served as president of the American Fisheries Society, is a life-long Eagle Scout and the teacher and mentor of a room full of fisheries biologists who will continue his legacy in aquatic, social and political arenas. Having Dr. Jackson on my wildlife and fisheries camp staff gave me the opportunity to, not only learn from him, but to watch a master demonstrate and transfer the torch of responsibility to future stewards of our rivers. I could not be more pleased that at our January meeting he will give us his perspective on Earth's fisheries, local and afar. *(Submitted by J. Guyton)*

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.



Dr. Don Jackson, professor and author, is pictured leading a fisheries session in a youth camp.



Pictures by F. Box



Noxubee Nature Store Purchase Items

New Fish and Wildlife Service policy prohibits employees of the Refuge from handling transactions within Friends of Noxubee Nature Store. Only a member of the Friends group can help purchase items. Please consider helping fill this void by joining the Friends of Noxubee.



Quilt Trail Complete

The SDH Noxubee NWR Quilt Trail, a part of the Oktibbeha County Barn Quilt Trail, officially opened in September. Working with civic groups and Mississippi State University faculty, Starkville Area Arts Council initiated the project of developing a barn quilt trail. With assistance in construction from Eagle Scout, Cam Maddox, members of Friends adapted and painted traditional quilt pattern designs to represent the flora and fauna found on the Refuge. Noxubee interns and staff framed mounted the five squares which are Bald Eagle, Tracks, Flowers, Fish, and Crossed Canoes.

Hodges Receives First Sam D. Hamilton Friends of Noxubee Refuge Scholarship

Nicole Hodges, D.V.M., Associate Wildlife Biologist, is the first recipient of the Sam D. Hamilton Friends of Noxubee Refuge Scholarship. Established in 2011 in memory of Starkville native Sam Hamilton, who was director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and a graduate of Mississippi State University, the scholarship is awarded to graduate students who demonstrate efforts in conservation volunteer work and who have served internships on national wildlife refuges. Hodges, in the final year of a PhD program in Forest Resources, received a bachelors degree from MSU in wildlife pre-veterinary science, completing a D.V.M. in 2011. Currently, she is working on a research project funded by the MS Ecological Services Field Office of the USFWS. The project, designed to determine the cause of metabolic bone disease in gopher tortoises, evaluates the nutrient content of soil and forage samples collected in study areas in MS. Hopefully, the results will contribute to the recovery of gopher tortoises, endangered in MS and threatened in the western portion of their range.

Hodges, a research associate in the Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Department at MSU, also works on other research projects while pursuing her PhD. On U.S. Forest Service lands in Mississippi and on Stennis Space Center property, she conducts surveys concerning rare fauna and flora, and, with the MS Bat Working Group, monitors white-nose syndrome in the bat population. In her letter of thanks for receiving the scholarship, Hodges states, on completing her PhD, she hopes to work in academia, become a state wildlife veterinarian, or work in a diagnostic lab continuing to conduct research on endangered species, habitat management, and wildlife diseases.

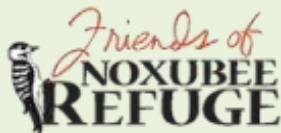
To assist future students by contributing to the Sam D. Hamilton Friends of Noxubee Refuge Scholarship, contact Jeff Little, director of development for the College of Forest Resources, P.O. Box 9680, Mississippi State, MS 39762, or jlittle@foundation.msstate.edu.



Chester Martin and Nicole Hodges setting up a mist net to catch bats in Tishomingo County, MS. (July 2014)



Picture by D.Richardson
Looking for bats in a cavity tree at Noxubee NWR. (Summer 2007)



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through volunteer work and fund raising.

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2015 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DATES

15-Jan
16-Apr
18-Jun
17-Sep

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>.