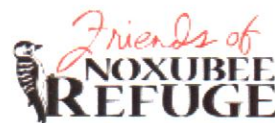


Noxubee Notes



Volume 3 Number 2

April 2006

Junior Refuge Ranger Program Now at Noxubee

Noxubee's newly introduced Junior Refuge Ranger program provides young people with conservation information, environmental education and recreational experiences. Students from eight to fourteen years of age may participate. To be named a Junior Refuge Ranger, enrollees will participate in six self-selected refuge activities within 12 months. Participants may register at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center, where they will receive a Junior Refuge Ranger Passport and detailed information on the activities. Passports are stamped upon completion of an activity. After receiving six stamps, the student receives a certificate, a reward and is named a Junior Refuge Ranger.



Refuge activities are open to anyone and are offered throughout the year. See the calendar on page 3 for scheduled activities. All activities, with the exception to the Youth Fishing Derby, are free of charge.

Know Our Refuge Staff . . . Johnny Wayne Bradford



Johnny Wayne Bradford was born, raised and still lives in Winston County. In fact, he lives only seven miles from the refuge office. Long-time refuge manager Burton Webster first hired him as a part-time employee in 1969. Johnny Wayne continued to work for the refuge "off and on" until the mid 80s when he became a full-time permanent biological technician.

As a bio tech, Johnny Wayne has a variety of jobs and responsibilities including, but not limited to, helping protect the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, monitoring and management of water levels in the lakes, moist soil management in the Green Tree Reservoirs and assisting/aiding in most biological management practices. Johnny Wayne is well known as the "duck man" since he administers the yearly duck hunts. In that role, he says, "I enjoy meeting all the hunters, but especially the young people." A skilled hunter himself, Johnny Wayne is a positive influence for good sportsmanship.

Although he does spend a lot of free time in the woods and is an avid fisherman, Johnny Wayne likes to garden and work in his yard. He and his wife of 37 years, Nancy, have a son Brad and a daughter Stephanie. The four grandchildren are also an important part of his leisure time. Whatever he does, Johnny says, "I just try to have a good time every day." Most of us would do well to emulate that effort.

When asked if he had a pet project that the friends' group could help with, Johnny quickly said, "A bluebird program!" He pointed out there are miles of refuge that have no boxes, and he would like to see many additional boxes built, placed and maintained. He said, "I think it would be enjoyable to do that and keep records of productivity, etc." He went on to say that he appreciates the work of FONR and all the projects already accomplished.

In closing, Johnny Wayne summed up his goal in helping maintain Noxubee Refuge as a biologically sound and productive area. He said, "I consider the refuge my back yard, and I want to treat it that way. I love everything there is about it." With help from staff like Johnny Wayne Bradford, the refuge will remain the figurative "backyard" of us all. Thanks, Mr. Duckman!

FONR Meeting Soon, Plan to Attend

The April 20 meeting of FONR, scheduled for 6:30 in the Tisdale Auditorium, will feature refuge biologist David Richardson. His various endeavors take him up trees, into lakes and streams and out at all hours. Richardson will recount somewhat curious project experiences not necessarily following the presumed route. Some of the biologist's forays take interesting twists that Richardson is adept at recounting. Entitled "Wildlife Biologist, Mishaps and Adventures," the program is one you won't want to miss. See you there!

A Tribute to Ray . . .

FONR members were saddened by the death of J. Ray Watson on March 17, 2006. Ray was retired from the MSU Biological Sciences Department. Teaching, particularly dendrology (trees and shrubs), was the job he enjoyed most. The refuge was his outdoor lab that he loved sharing with students and friends.

Ray was a founding member of FONR, serving on the original Constitution and Bylaws Committee. He was a member of the first Board of Directors and was chair of the 2005 Nominations Committee. He never missed a meeting and was one of FONR's most loyal supporters. Ray helped lay a solid foundation for our organization and was a mentor for each of us.

We will miss Ray—his exuberance for every aspect of life was unsurpassed.



Azalea blooming in the native plant garden.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: *It's Spring at Noxubee*

Well, it's spring already. It seems like I just sat down to compose my first President's Report last December, and now I am working on my second.

The native azaleas are blooming and enjoying their first spring in the Native Plant Garden at the Visitor Center. Yes, Lady Noxubee is beginning to awaken. FONR, with much help from the refuge staff, has completed the first phase of the boardwalk through the Native Plant Garden which will enhance the enjoyment of the garden.

The joy of spring was dampened by the death of Ray Watson, longtime friend of the refuge. We are all saddened by his passing and extend our heartfelt sympathies to his family. The FONR Board is presently deliberating on a memorial for Ray at the refuge.

The Board developed and approved a financial budget that will help us better focus and expedite our programs for the coming year. Thanks go to Sherrie Wiygul and the Financial Committee.

The Program Committee has worked hard to develop a full slate of Saturday programs. Already we've had Astronomy for Beginners, the Annual Bluebird Workshop, the Earth Day Celebration, a Photo-Walk and the Nature Photograph Workshop. All of these programs have been well attended. Upcoming programs include Exploring Mississippi Flora, a tour of native plants by MSU's Bob Brzuszek; a walking tour of a Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony; canoeing at Bluff Lake; and the annual Fishing Derby. The refuge has constructed two ponds in Smith Field that will make for a more enjoyable fishing experience for young anglers.

FONR will soon adopt a section of Highway 25, and we are looking for volunteers to help keep the roadside clean. For that matter, FONR can use help with all of its programs. There are plenty of opportunities to make a contribution to our organization for the betterment of the refuge. I hope you will get involved. The beauty of Lady Noxubee is just too alluring for you not to.

See you at the refuge.

Joe Mulrooney

Nature Photo Walk a Soggy Success

Amateur photographer and FONR board member Linda Lodato recently led a Photo Walk as one of the "Saturdays at the Refuge." The following is her report of the day's outing.

The morning was damp, cold, misty and threatening rain—but it didn't discourage approximately 15 dedicated photographers who showed up at the refuge for a workshop. Due to soggy trails, the group viewed several easily accessible sites, to practice the ability to "see" rather than just "look" at their surroundings—The Art of Seeing!

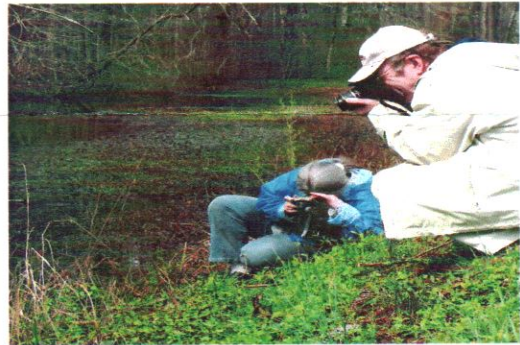
It was a great group, varying in age, photographic experience and camera equipment. There was talk of getting together again to share with each other the pictures taken that day and a possible follow-up seminar in the future, maybe navigating those trails. The idea of assembling a camera club was also discussed.

If you have suggestions on another workshop or a future club, please e-mail Linda Lodato at: lodatol@bellsouth.net

Happy Trails to You...Only if We Help

Trail walking is a great way to exercise and enjoy the many wonderful sights and sounds that the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge has to offer. Trail walkers assist in the removal of trash as well as reporting the condition of the trails that they walk. If you are already walking a trail or are interested in becoming a trail walker, please email John Long at jlong@entomology.msstate.edu

Editor's Note: *Thanks to Margaret Copeland, Elsie Croft, Lawrence Croft, Linda Lodato and Marion Sansing for submitting articles and pictures and for proofing/editing assistance. Thanks to Andrea Dunstan and refuge staff members for printing the newsletter.*



Two participants in the Nature Photo Walk caught on film. Wonder what they found?

Check Membership, Renew Promptly

When renewing your membership in FONR, please remember the membership dues for individuals and families have been increased.

Membership dues are as follows:

- \$15 individual
- \$20 family
- \$100 patron
- \$100 corporate
- \$250 individual life
- \$350 family life
- \$1000 sustaining
- \$5000 benefactor

Other methods of donation include memorial gifts, bequests, designated gifts, etc. All donations are tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Noxubee Refuge, 2970 Bluff Lake Road, Brooksville, MS 39739. For more information, contact the Refuge Office at 662-323-5548.

“Saturdays at the Refuge” Offers Wide Variety of Activities

April 15 Exploring Mississippi Flora

Join Bob Brzuszek for an educational walk through the woods. He will identify the plants found there and discuss how plants adapt to the different environmental conditions. A tour through the newly established Native Plant Garden is included; see how natives can fit into the home landscape. Meet at the Visitor Center at 10 a.m.

May 6, 13, 20, & 27 Canoeing at Bluff Lake

Come canoe on Bluff Lake. This is a great opportunity to explore the rookery up close, where an average of 5,000 wading birds nest. Canoes, life jackets and paddles are provided. The launch site is next to the Bluff Lake boat ramp by the spillway. 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

May 20 The Red-cockaded Woodpecker

Take a guided walking tour through one of the active colonies during the busy breeding season. Learn more about this endangered species and maybe get a glimpse of the rare bird. Bring binoculars; a limited number is available. Meet at the Visitor Center at 10 a.m.

June 3 Guided Canoe Trip Bluff Lake Rookery

Explore the shoreline and peninsula of Bluff Lake and continue to the rookery for a unique wildlife observation experience. This is a must-see for bird watchers and people who enjoy wetlands. See an

area of lily pads, cypress and other aquatic dwellers. The wading birds frequent this area, and the cattle egret rookery should be active. Meet at the Visitor Center; departure is from Doyle Arm. 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Registration is required.

June 10 4th Annual Youth Fishing Derby Begins at 8 a.m. Registration is required. Call the refuge office at 323-5548.

June 17 Ladies, Bait Your Hook

Ladies, learn about and get involved in fishing. All ages will enjoy this informal session on various aspects of freshwater fishing. Types of fish you can catch, fishing methods and the various tools of the trade will be discussed. After the in-class session, the group will move outdoors to a fishing pond where participants will bait their own hooks and try to catch some catfish. Bring your own pole if possible; a limited number will be available for use. Registration is required.

July 1 Night Prowl

Visit the refuge after hours and see/hear some of the nocturnal wildlife. Learn fun facts about owls and possibly see alligators' eyes glow red in the night. Reservations are required as space is limited.

First Refuge Earth Day Celebration a Success, Fun for All

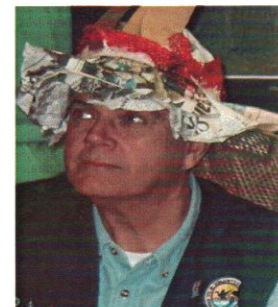
As part of the “Saturdays at the Refuge” program and with the help of Friends, Earth Day was celebrated this year at the refuge for the first time. Most activities revolved around the theme “Reuse First, Recycle Later.” Many activities were designed with children in mind, but adults had just as much fun making newspaper hats! While learning about the Blue Goose symbol and the flight and migration of the Snow Geese, each child was encouraged to make a large paper goose to be hung as part of a giant mobile in the visitor center. The display resembles a large flock of Snow Geese taking flight. A Blue Goose enameled pin was given as a reward.

Many Friends and refuge staff members saved trash to recycle in some of the other activities. Grocery paper bags were turned into wreaths, newspaper into hats, old Fish and Wildlife Service posters into paper bead necklaces, aluminum from cans into ornaments, and used wrapping paper was shredded into Easter grass. One table was loaded with good trash and other supplies to make whatever the creative heart desired. Gestalt

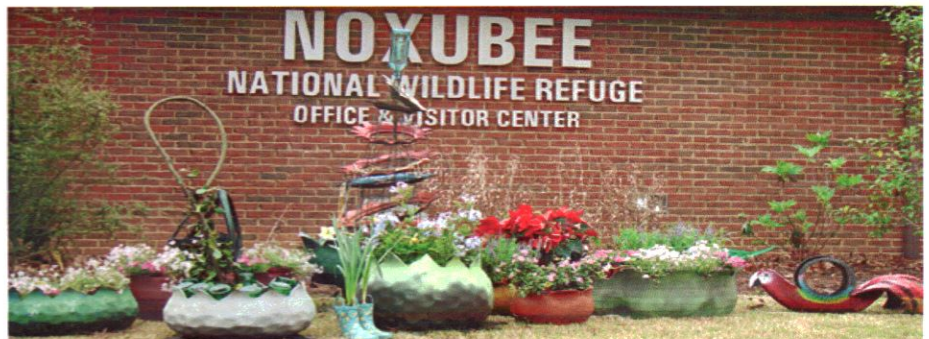
Gardener Felder Rushing provided 10 tire planters for display. These were well received in the spirit of Earth Day and creative gardening. Native plants were sold—encouraging local gardeners to create a backyard wildlife habitat. An information booth provided insight into the management of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

In addition to the activities, funds were raised for Plant It 2020, a campaign to plant indigenous trees in communities and forests

throughout the Southeast. About 65 visitors attended Earth Day 2006 under the forecast of rain, which never came. Next year a bigger crowd and better weather are expected.



Children of all ages enjoyed making hats during Earth Day Celebration. (FONR Vice-President Larry Box made an especially nice one.) The display of garden items made from old tires was a hit with participants.



In the Manager's Corner...

Spring is here, and the refuge is coming alive with the blooming of Dogwoods, Chickasaw Plums, wild Azaleas and Redbuds. The forests are turning hues of green and yellow, and refuge visitation is on the upswing. Fishing has been fairly good, and turkey hunting is underway.

It is with heavy hearts that we all had to say farewell to our dear friend, Dr. James Ray Watson, who passed away on March 17. Ray Watson was a friend and mentor to numerous individuals. He was a founding member and a charter board member of the Friends of Noxubee. He will be greatly missed.

Since the last newsletter, the refuge staff has completed more than 6,000 acres of prescribed burning. Annual burning aids in controlling under-story vegetation, reduces hazardous fuels and helps promote quality habitat for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. When you visit the refuge, you will notice that a lot of trees blew down during the severe windstorm we had on March 9th. All public access roads are open, and the debris piles will be removed shortly.

A special thanks to the Friends and other volunteers for help in building the boardwalk in the Native Plant Garden, for hosting and helping with our successful Earth Day event, guided eagle and waterfowl walks, astronomy for beginners, photo walk, blue-bird workshop and planting in the Native Plant Garden. All of these could not have been done without your planning and assistance. Thank you!

I would like to invite all members to our Second Annual Friends and Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon to be held April 22, 2006, at 12:00 p.m. at the Larry Box Environmental Center. Please make your reservation by April 17, at 323-5548. If the weather is nice, we will have canoes available for outings on Loakfoma Lake. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Henry Sansing

Second Annual Appreciation Luncheon April 22

The Second Annual Friends and Volunteer Luncheon will be April 22, 2006, at 12:00 p.m. at the Larry Box Environmental Center. All FONR members are invited to attend. Make your reservation by April 17 by calling 323-5548. This event is a way to say *Thanks* for all the volunteer hours and support given the refuge during the past year.

This is a quarterly publication of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge, a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization.



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