

## Three New Eaglets

Bald eagles have been nesting in a pine stand behind Smith Field at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for several years. This year, however, the pair moved, constructed a new nest and on February 18th started hatching eggs. On March 9th, it was confirmed that three eaglets were in the nest and doing well. The state's database indicates only eight nests in Mississippi have raised three young, so it isn't common. The nest and development of the young will continue to be monitored. If you would like to see the nest, at the arrow on Bluff Lake Road just west of the Visitor Center, look through the trees to the west/southwest by Doyle Arm. You should be able to see it with binoculars but, of course, the best viewing is through a birding scope.



*Photo taken March 9, 2008 by Lawrence Croft*



## Dr. Ray Watson Memorial Trail

**DEDICATION & RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY**  
Friday, April 25th 1:00 p.m.

In concurrence with the celebration of National Arbor Day

This trail is being dedicated to the memory of Dr. James Ray Watson (1935-2006), retired professor of botany at Mississippi State University. Dr. Watson was a charter member of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge (FONR), and after his death, members of FONR and many others in the surrounding community donated funds to establish this interpretative trail to honor him.

Dr. Watson, who taught dendrology (the study of woody plants: trees, shrubs, vines) for many years, frequently utilized the forests of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for outdoor laboratory sessions with his students. He also enjoyed hunting, bird watching, and other outdoor experiences on the refuge and in nearby forests. One of his favorite trees was the cherrybark oak, a highly prized red oak for both wildlife and timber, many of which can be seen along the trail. Dr. Watson also enjoyed the writings of Edward Abbey, especially the quote, "The idea of wilderness needs no defense. It only needs more defenders."

This walking trail originates and ends directly across the road from Noxubee Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center. Approximately ¾ mile long, it will take you through a typical pine-hardwood forest of the upper Coastal Plain. Over 30 species of trees, shrubs, and woody vines that have been identified along the trail; examples of each are marked by numbered signs and plant identification markers.

## General Meeting

April 17  
6:30 PM

Noxubee  
Visitor  
Center

We invite you to join us for our general meeting with a presentation by Gerald McKibben. Mr. McKibben is a local naturalist and retired USDA ARS. He will be discussing interesting birds and the origins of bird names.





## From The President

Winter is giving way to spring on the refuge and human and animal activity is increasing. The big news is the nesting eagles, but there is always interesting wildlife behavior to encounter. In mid-March I was at the goose overlook. In the water directly below the observation deck was an exceptionally large cottonmouth snake (*Aghistrodon piscivorus*). It was attempting to swallow a good size catfish but was having trouble getting the fish to go down. After ten minutes or so, I left them, not sure if the moccasin would be able to make a meal of the catfish. It appeared the snake would still be able to let go if that became necessary. It all reminded me of my dad reminding me, "Don't let your eyes be bigger than your stomach."

The various FONR committees are at work on an array of projects. Frank Bonner and others have done an excellent job of developing the Dr. Ray Watson Trail. This will be a one-of-a-kind trail complete with audio visual information about over 30 trees and shrubs, and it will be dedicated in memory of FONR charter member Dr. Ray Watson. The dedication is scheduled for April 25th at 1 p.m. Please join us!

We are still in need of a person to assemble and maintain the FONR scrapbook. Also other committees would benefit from additional members. I encourage each of you to become active in FONR. I'm sure you have a talent and interest that will make a contribution. Call me at 662-323-6895 and I will help you connect with the activity where your talents will be put to good use.

I hope to see you on the refuge soon!

~ Larry Box



Photos taken March 22 on Scattertown Trail by Marion Sansing

## Saturdays At The Refuge

### **APRIL 5, 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM; Visitor Center Nature Journal: The Art of Seeing Workshop**

Robin Whitfield, [www.robinwhitfield.com](http://www.robinwhitfield.com), a Grenada artist and naturalist, will inspire participants to explore drawing and experimental techniques as a way to "see" and actively engage the natural world.

### **APRIL 19, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM; Visitor Center EARTH DAY: How climate change affects you?**

Come and join us in a conversation with other local concerned citizens on how climate change may affect Mississippi's culture and environment. This presentation will provide an overview of the current status of climate change, from the melting glaciers of Greenland to the vast ice sheets of Antarctica.

### **MAY 3, 9 AM - 12 PM; Visitor Center Exploring Mississippi Flora**

Join Professor Bob Brzuszek for an educational walk through the woods. He will identify the plants found along the trail and discuss how plants are adapted to the different environmental conditions found there. Learn how natives can fit into our home landscape.

### **MAY 17, 9 AM - 12 PM; Visitor Center Ladies, Bait Your Hook – Registration required**

### **JUNE 7 & JULY 5, 8:30 AM - 3 PM; Boat Ramp Canoeing at Bluff Lake**

Canoes, life jackets and paddles will be available for you to take out on Bluff Lake at no charge.

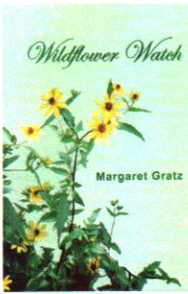
### **JUNE 21, 8 AM - 10 AM Sixth Annual Youth Fishing Derby**

The Derby will be held at our two fishing ponds, stocked with catfish for the event. Their grassy banks make fishing safe and easy. Children ages four through fifteen must pre-register to participate, or may register the morning of the derby, if our limit has not been met. There are two types of registration: \$10 with a rod & reel provided or \$5 without. Prizes will be awarded in all age categories for the largest fish and heaviest stringer of fish. Each registered child will receive a goodie bag and prize.

### **JULY 19, 8:30 AM - 12 PM; Visitor Center Introduction to Mushroom Collecting and ID**

An introductory talk will be followed by a walk in the woods to find mushrooms on the Refuge. An open-ended session will follow the walk to comment on and identify the mushrooms found. Useful items to bring: basket, paper bags, wax (bags or paper), pocket knife, & mushroom field guide.





## Book Review

By Florence Box


The nature writings of Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal columnist Margaret Gratz, also known as "The Earth Lady," have been combined into two books, *Wildflower Watch* and *At Home in the Earth Lady's Garden*.

In *Wildflower Watch*, Gratz identifies and describes more than 200 wildflowers growing in Northeast Mississippi. To assist in identification of flowers, the book is arranged seasonally or according to bloom time. Each flower has its own photograph and basic scientific information. An excellent reference book for those interested in learning about Mississippi wildflowers, the book is also fun to read.

Recently published, *At Home in the Earth Lady's Garden* is both informative and entertaining. Delightfully illustrated in watercolor by the author, *At Home* describes the flora and fauna Gratz has observed in her garden. The animals, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and plants that Gratz writes about are ones that we can see in our own neighborhoods. Gratz will speak at Noxubee in October at the Mississippi Native Plant Society annual meeting. Both books are for sale at the Nature Store.



# Noxubee Nature Store



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MON-FRI 8:00AM - 4:30PM  
SAT 10:00AM - 4:00PM  
SUN 1:00PM - 5:00PM

## The Flyer

The National Wildlife Refuge Association's magazine has recently been discontinued due to funding issues. While it has not been ruled out that it may start back up in the next fiscal year, for now it is only being offered in an electronic format. Please check out the latest edition of **The Flyer** on the NWRA's homepage: [www.refugeassociation.org](http://www.refugeassociation.org).

## Fuel Reimbursement Offered

Thank You For Volunteering!

Volunteers working the Visitor Center are encouraged to keep up with their mileage to and from the Center. Mileage reimbursements will be at the government rate for a privately owned vehicle at the time of travel. A claim for reimbursement form and direct deposit information will be required. Please contact Visitor Center Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Crawford at 323-2514 or Office Administrator Gwen Cotton at 323-5548.

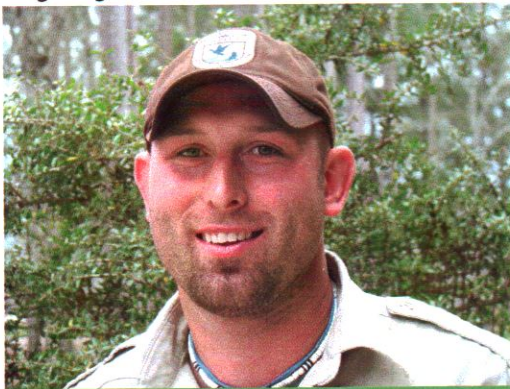
## Meet The Staff: Chad Fondren

Noxubee's senior firefighter, Waymon "Chad" Fondren, is a native of Choctaw County, Mississippi, and attended Itawamba Community College and Wood Junior College.

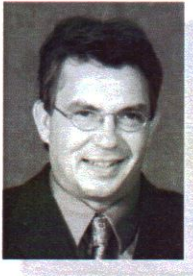
He started at Noxubee in March 2002, as a forestry aid (firefighter) and was promoted to supervisory forestry technician in 2006. As with many other positions on refuges, firefighter is a position that encompasses a wide variety of duties. Chad regularly performs construction, forest inventory, routine maintenance, heavy equipment operation and of course, prescribed burns and wildland fire fighting. When asked what he liked best about working at Noxubee, he said, "Low stress, physical labor, working outside, getting to see a lot of the country on wildfires, meeting new people, and working with the people here at Noxubee."

Chad has had the opportunity to see the country in his capacity of firefighter, but unfortunately most of it was burning at the time. He has been detailed to more than 19 states but declares, "There's no place like home." His most exciting prescribed burn was on Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge located on Fort McClellan, Alabama, with unexploded ordinance popping all around him.

He built his own house entirely out of salvaged timber from Hurricane Katrina just in time for his bride, Ashley, to move in after their wedding on November 11, 2006. They now reside in that house in Ackerman with their two dogs, Pete and Dickle. Outside of work he most enjoys boating, blues music, fishing, and good food.







## Manager's Corner

Spring is upon us and the refuge is beginning to shine! The redbuds along with the Chickasaw plums are really putting on a show. Fishing has begun in earnest and the turkey hunters are scouring the woodlands. Our three "now famous" baby eagles and their parents have been attracting many refuge visitors and photographers.

Refuge staff has been busy trying to complete prescribed burning, forest evaluation and assistance for other refuges. We have completed prescribed burns on 4,700 acres of refuge habitat and assisted with completing a prescribed fire on 1,600 acres at Mountain Longleaf Refuge in Anniston, Alabama. The refuge attempts to burn approximately 5,000+ acres annually for habitat improvement and perpetuation of the red-cockaded woodpecker's foraging areas. The staff has also completed 3,600 acres of forest evaluation (timber cruising) on the refuge and preparations for assisting Dahomey Refuge, where our staff will conduct a timber cruise on 8,000 acres in April. It may be a surprise to many that we provide assistance to other refuges, but in times of insufficient staffing, we all have to reach out and assist other refuges in an attempt to fulfill the mission of the refuge system.

Friends and volunteers have also been busy developing a new bird feeding area as part of the Refuge Chief's birding initiative. Signage has been completed for the native plant garden. Numerous new plant species have been added to enhance both the native plant garden and bird feeding area. You may also notice new fencing is being erected throughout the refuge and within public-use areas.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association's National Conference will be held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepardstown, West Virginia April 4-6, with a visit to Capitol Hill planned for April 7. This year our Friends' representatives at the conference will be Susan Brooks and Glenn Bryant, and our staff liaison will be Park Ranger Andrea Dunstan. I am sure they will bring a lot back to our group from the conference and that their visits to our Congressional delegates will be beneficial to the refuge and the refuge system.

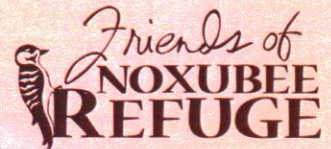
In honor of National Arbor Day and to celebrate the opening of the Dr. Ray Watson Memorial Trail, we will have a ribbon cutting ceremony at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, April 25th. I invite everyone to come out and celebrate this event with us. Dr. Ray Watson was a retired professor of botany from MSU and a founding member of FONR. Even though we all miss Dr. Watson, his spirit and love for the woodlands lives on within this special trail dedicated in his honor.

I hope to see you all out on "your refuge" soon!

~ Henry Sansing

## Noxubee Notes Go Online

To help FONR save on postage/ mailing costs, please notify Marion Sansing at: [marionsansing@bellsouth.net](mailto:marionsansing@bellsouth.net), if you wish to receive *Noxubee Notes* (4 issues/year) by E-mail as a weblink.



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 an application or information about the Refuge call (662) 323-5548.

### EDITOR

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