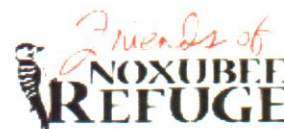


Noxubee Notes



Volume 3 Number 3

June 2006

Volunteers Box, Copeland Named Regional Winners

During the Second Annual Friends and Volunteers Appreciation Luncheon in April, Manager Henry Sansing announced that two FONR members were named winners of the Regional Director's Honor Award for volunteerism. Florence Box and Margaret Copeland, both founding members of Friends and dedicated volunteers were recognized. The following is excerpted from Sansing's nomination documents.

Florence Box led the design and development of the Noxubee Nature Store and has served as the store's manager since its inception. Through Florence's hard work and dedication, the nature store has been crafted into a top-of-the-line outlet, selling unique items—many handmade by Friends' members and local artists. She attended national and regional Friends workshops in 2004 and 2005, learning about refuge store development and promotion of Friends groups. Florence explored how other stores were set up, visiting other refuges, museums, nature centers and national parks. She accumulated and established contacts with suppliers and negotiated for good prices while developing an excellent inventory of items for nature enthusiasts, both young and old. Her vision and hard work help Friends in ways beyond the nature store. She helped with the native plant garden and assisted with three annual youth



Florence in the Nature Store

fishing derbies and National Wildlife Refuge Week events. Florence volunteers weekends, keeping the visitor center open to the general public, and participates in any capacity that helps benefit the refuge and its programs. She accumulated 460 hours of volunteer work at Noxubee in 2005.

Margaret Copeland is an extraordinary volunteer. She has served as the secretary and archivist since the formation of the Friends group in May 2003. Margaret helped develop the original by-laws of the group and was the first membership recruitment coordinator. Margaret helped lead several programs early in the group's formation and continues to work on all projects at the refuge. She was the

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Summer Meeting Thursday, June 15, see details inside.
FONR Fall Meeting scheduled for September 21, 2006.

Know Our Refuge Staff . . . Paul Caudill



Paul Caudill began work on Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge just out of Starkville High School—as a temporary employee. Paul remained in the temporary position while attending MSU, but when offered a full-time position after a couple of years, he didn't resist. Now 31 years later, he's still at work on the refuge and is currently the longest-tenured employee at Noxubee. Paul said occasionally he has questioned his choice of starting

work rather than finishing school and trying another profession, but he really doesn't regret his decision. After all, he said, "If I want to, I'm still young enough to do something else after I retire from here."

The long-time employee's title is Equipment Operator, but like most refuge employees, Paul does a number of things, including being responsible for SAMMS. That's an *it*, not a *who*. Service Asset Maintenance Management System is the computer program that Paul uses to keep track of field work. He also maintains a lot of both large and small equipment and said, "Mostly, I do what needs to be done."

There is one *who* that Paul takes primary responsibility for, and that's Bob, the bobtailed cat. A little explaining is in order: Years ago, the equipment shed and seed storage area had an ongoing problem with mice. One day a tiny ill-fed and diseased kitten appeared. After some discussion and medical care, the field crew adopted him, with Paul being the main caretaker and provider. As the kitten grew larger, the mice problem grew smaller. So Bob remains, another valuable employee and well cared for by Paul.

Paul used vacation days to drive a tour bus for many years, and said he still loves to travel. Many Starkville youth remember him as the pleasant driver of the bus at First United Methodist Church where he remains active. However, with the arrival of grandchildren, Paul curtailed his driving to have time to enjoy them. Paul and his wife, Jeannie, have two children and five grandchildren. The youngest is only a couple of weeks old; daughter Donna had a little girl to go with her two boys, while son Al has a daughter and a son.

Paul proclaims that he isn't very colorful and someone else should be featured. Well, OK, in plain black and white . . . Paul's vast institutional memory and knowledge of the equipment and facilities make him a very valuable commodity to Noxubee. No colorful personality needed--just a long-term employee "doing what needs to be done." Paul, we appreciate you!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The refuge is in full foliage as the temperatures begin to climb. The other day, as I was entering the north entrance to the refuge, I felt like I was entering a cathedral with spires of trees forming the nave. I always get the feeling of entering a holy place when I cross the refuge boundary and look into the dense woods with all their beauty. I immediately feel peaceful. The refuge is just that--a refuge from the cares of the world.

The Friends have been active this spring. Since my last report, we have had our second Nature Photography Workshop which was attended by 14 people from Memphis, Grenada, Laurel, Columbus and Starkville. Buddy Laird did an excellent job of introducing us to the skills that he has acquired over many years photographing the refuge. We are very appreciative of the time he spent putting the workshop together.

Volunteers at the refuge were treated to a delicious luncheon by Manager Henry Sansing and the Refuge Staff in April. I want to thank Henry et al. on behalf of the volunteers; it's nice to know you are appreciated.

As part of our Saturday Programs, Bob Brzuszek gave an excellent tour through the native plant garden and along the trail from the Visitor Center to the Environmental Education Center. Participants learned not only the native plants at the refuge, and were given tips on how to best grow them in their yards. Thanks to Bob for an informative outing.

Programs in May included a guided walking tour of Red-cockaded Woodpecker clusters given by Dave Richardson. Also on Saturdays in May, the Friends had canoes available for visitors to use. An average of 20 people per day took advantage of the opportunity to canoe Bluff Lake and see the rookery up close. Based on much positive feedback from the participants, the Friends will have canoes available again in the fall.

Dave Richardson has worked diligently to get the remote cameras operational. Visitors can see nesting egrets and herons in the rookery from a monitor in the Visitor Center. A second camera is being readied for installation at the rookery. Thanks, Dave.

Plans are underway to develop audio-tours of native plants on the refuge. This project is a memorial to Ray Watson and is being funded by donations from the many people who have sent in memorials for Ray. Visitors will be able to use these audios on self-guided tours of the flora of the refuge. This will be an outstanding way of remembering Ray and will serve as a continuation of his love of the native plants of the refuge.

A committee is being formed, with Bob Fye as chairperson, to identify possible Friends projects for the Refuge. FONR has some funds available for projects. Members with ideas for projects can submit them directly to Bob (323-1627) or to the refuge office (323-5548).

The Annual Fishing Derby will be held June 10, from 8:00–10:00 a.m. Fishing will be in the new ponds built by the refuge in Smith Field which will be stocked with 750 hungry catfish. The Derby is open to children from 4-15 years.

Saturday programs will continue throughout the rest of the year on the first and third Saturdays of the month. I hope that everyone will take advantage of these informative programs. See you at the Refuge.

Joe Mulrooney

A BOOK REVIEW . . .

***A Handmade Wilderness* by Don Schueler**

If you ever dreamed of "saving" a piece of land, this book is for you. Twenty-five years ago, the author and a friend, wishing to escape their New Orleans life on the weekends, started looking for a piece of land. They were on a limited budget so their choices were few, and affordable plots were marginal. They decided to find "the least worst land" they could afford. They ended up with 80 acres of cut-over land. At one time, mixed hardwoods, longleaf pine and extensive pitcher plants were the dominant ecosystems. Since clear-cuts preceded their purchase, only a few hardwoods and the pitcher plant bogs remained. The next decades saw them doing most of the restoration work by hand, coexisting with loose domestic animals and some doubting neighbors. By the time of this writing (1996), the land was in good shape, with deer returning and a healthy plant and animal population. There is much to learn in this book which honestly documents their correct and incorrect actions. The gopher tortoises left because the owners did not want to burn their rapidly growing woods. At the end of the book, the author has burned, and he is optimistic that more gopher tortoises will join the remaining resident. Eventually, Schueler buys adjacent land, his friend dies, and the Gulf Coast continues to be developed, sometimes in an alarming way. He deeds the land to the Nature Conservancy with lifetime rights to live there. It is now the Willie Farrell Brown Nature Reserve.

The pleasure the two took in the resident wildlife and success of the restoration make this book somewhat sad but meaningful

This book review was provided by Sherrie Wiygul. If you would be willing to provide a review, please send an e-mail to jimjac@bellsouth.net.

Camera Projects Rookery Views into Visitor Center

Two wireless video cameras have been set up in the egret rookery of Bluff Lake near the boardwalk. The cameras are powered by a solar panel and back-up battery system. The video images are broadcast (real-time) via wireless transmitter/receiver systems to the exhibit hall of the Visitor Center. There, the images are displayed on two large monitors near the rookery display of nesting birds. The cameras are focused on nesting cattle egrets which now have young. As the birds leave the nest, the cameras will be realigned to see other birds nesting in the rookery. While the project was funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation, FONR and the refuge recently purchased an upgraded wireless system to deal with problems of broadcasting the video images. According to Biologist David Richardson, the project provides a wonderful way to view distant wildlife up close while still being far away.

Saturdays at the Refuge

June 10



FOURTH ANNUAL YOUTH FISHING DERBY

will be held at our new 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 register the morning of the derby, if our limit is not met. There are two types of registration: \$10 includes a rod & reel with tackle assortment or \$5 without the rod. Prizes will be awarded for all age categories for the largest fish and heaviest limit. Each registered child will receive a goodie bag and a door prize. 8 a.m. - 10 a.m. Follow the signs to the ponds.



June 17



LADIES BAIT YOUR HOOK

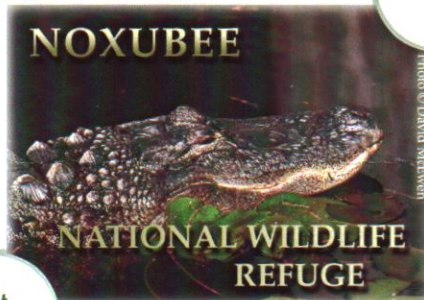
Ladies of all ages, who want to learn about and get involved in fishing, will enjoy this informal session on the various types of freshwater fishing. The types of fish you can catch, fishing methods and the various tools of the trade will be shown and demonstrated. After the in-class session, we will take the class outdoors to a fishing pond, and you will be able to bait your own hook and try your luck at catching some catfish. If you have your own fishing pole bring it, if not, we will have one for you to use. Registration is required. Meet at the visitor center at 9 a.m.

July 1 & August 5



NIGHT PROWL

Visit the Refuge after hours to see and hear some of the nocturnal wildlife. Learn fun facts about owls and maybe even see alligators' eyes glow in the night. Reservations are required as space is limited. Meet at the visitor center at 7 p.m.



July 15



WILD MISSISSIPPI

Become more informed and involved with the threatened and endangered species of Mississippi. During this interactive curriculum based program, participants will experience habitat destruction with the hands-on activity "Shrinking Mississippi", learn about unique critical species, and meet a true survivor - the American Alligator. A Presentation from the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. At the visitor center at 10 a.m. and again at 1 p.m.



KEEPING A NATURE JOURNAL

Join Dr. John Guyton to discuss nature journaling and sketching. In our discussion we will cover some of the kinds of observations that will enhance your enjoyment of nature. Bring your field notebook, or nature journal, and a pencil because we will only talk for a little while, before going outside to do some journaling and sketching. If you don't have a notebook you might wish to consider purchasing a hard-back book with blank pages. At the visitor center at 10 a.m.

September 2

BUTTERFLY TOUR



Summer is a great time to see butterflies at Morgan Hills Prairie. Binoculars are available or bring your own. Meet at Morgan Hills Prairie, 11 a.m.



September 16

PHOTO WALK



A nature photography experience for everyone. Read your camera manual and come out and have fun. Amateur photographer Linda Lodato will lead the walk to give ideas of photographic topics, to help "see" what can be photographed and to get more comfortable taking pictures outdoors, be it wildlife, plants or scenery. Meet at the Visitor Center at 8 a.m.

TRAIL RIDE
Call for Details

October 7

CANOEING AT BLUFF LAKE

We will have canoes available for you to take out on Bluff Lake. This is a great opportunity to explore the Rookery and Cypress stands at the beginning of autumn. Life jackets and paddles will be provided. The canoes will be launched next to the Bluff Lake boat ramp by the spillway. 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

October 21

NATIONAL REFUGE WEEK EVENT

A fun and informative event, free to the public, to raise appreciation of the importance of habitats for wildlife, with Exhibits, Demonstrations, Children's Activities and Live Music. In and around the Visitor Center 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

November 4

PAINT THE FALL COLORS

Melissa Dixon, a fine art graduate from Mississippi State, will host this painting workshop. Bring a sack lunch, a camera, a canvas or other material to paint on, brushes, the paint of your choice, an easel, and a chair or blanket to sit on. Because outdoor lighting changes quickly, acrylic paint is a good choice for on-site painting due to its quick drying time. We will meet in front of the Visitor's Center. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



2006 Events Calendar

For registration or information call (662) 323-5548



Junior Refuge Ranger Program



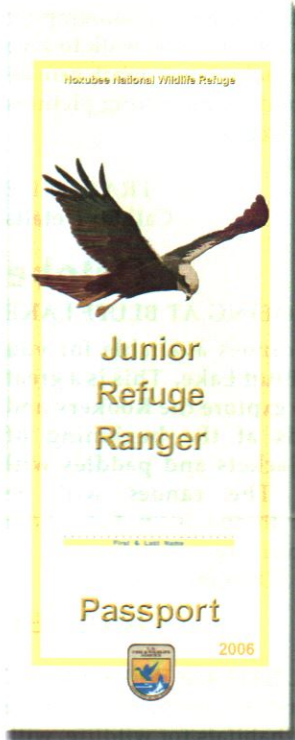
The Junior Refuge Ranger program provides young people with conservation information, environmental education and recreational experiences.

Students from eight to fourteen years of age may participate in the program. Activities are offered throughout the year and are open to anyone, young or old. Junior Refuge Ranger candidates must be accompanied by an adult.

All activities, with the exception to the Youth Fishing Derby, are free of charge and will take place unless severe weather causes cancellation or postponement. Participants should register by calling the refuge office at (662) 323-5548.

The day of the event, everyone should bring bug spray, sun screen and drinking water, as needed.

Ranger candidates should have their passports stamped after successfully completing each activity. To earn the title of Junior Refuge Ranger, each young person must collect a minimum of six stamps, for six different activities. Then he or she should contact Andrea Dunstan at the refuge to receive a certificate and reward.



Memories of Ray Watson—*lessons from a master*

We humans have some strange goals for ourselves. Two of mine have been to learn to ride horses well (I failed at that one), and to learn to identify trees. I wasn't doing well on the latter goal until, as a graduate student back in the mid-'80s, I enrolled in Ray's Dendrology course. Oh, if horseback riding had ever been that well-taught and pleasant, I would be an accomplished equestrian by now. If you ever rode with Ray at 60 mph and had him name the trees, in December when all one had to go by was shape and habitat, you knew you were riding with a master. If we asked him how he KNEW that was a post oak we had passed so quickly, his answer was "because it just looks like it." We called this "gestalting the trees." The academic material was basic, but the field work was sublime. Besides the field trips, my favorite part was THE TREE DIARY. This involved keeping a weekly journal of 23 species of trees found on the MSU campus, done on our own time complete with drawings and descriptions of the tree's development (this was spring semester so trees were "popping"). Nothing else I ever did in graduate school taught me as much as the tree diary. I kind of thought all trees did things at the same time; after all, one day they were bare, and then pretty soon, they had leaves. I never really thought much about tree reproduction. The tree diary is one of the few things I took, unchanged, into my high school biogeography course and boy, did the kids complain. They would be outside at midnight with a flashlight drawing the trees, but they did learn a few. The students in that Dendrology course knew we still weren't too good at identifying when Ray took us to the refuge for our final exam and pointed to a faroff giant tree as one of our exam trees. I believe we all missed it—it was the biggest black willow I had ever seen. When we all complained that we were 1/4 mile away, Ray's comment was—"Well, it looks like a black willow." And he was right.

Adapted from a submission to Commentary on Mississippi Public Radio by Sherrie Wiygul.

Donations Have Been Given

In Memory of Dr. Ray Watson

By:

Lyle Nelson
Robert C. Deweese
Frank and Anne Bonner
Lewis Brown
Lawrence and Elsie Croft
Bob and Mary Fye
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Gifford
Henry and Marion Sansing
Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Sciple
Mary and Gary Dorough
Fred and Julie Smith
Larry and Florence Box
Dr. C. T. and Shirley Carley, Jr.
Donald and Jackie Downer
Dr. Joe F. and Emilie Thompson
Archie and Ethel Wilson
Judge and Mrs. John Woodward Sognier
Hunter Andrews
William Elam
Harold Koelling
Charles Lowery
Margaret Copeland

FONR June Meeting Set, Native Plant Specialist Brzuszek Featured Speaker

The summer meeting of FONR is scheduled for Thursday, June 15, at 6:30 p.m. in the Tisdale Auditorium in the refuge visitor center. Bob Brzuszek will discuss native plants. Quite knowledgeable about native flora, Brzuszek was instrumental in selecting the correct plants and the design of FONR's Native Plant Garden in front of the Visitor Center. His horticultural interest, expertise, and engaging manner will make for an outstanding program. Author of numerous publications and a veteran speaker, Brzuszek has served as president of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and the Mississippi Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. A former curator of the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, Brzuszek joined the department of Landscape Architecture at MSU in 2003 as assistant professor. He holds degrees from Michigan State University and Louisiana State University. Other areas of interest include landscape restoration, urban ecology, and ecological restoration.



Bob Brzuszek contemplates the placement of native plants during the planting day held

Awards . . . *continued from page 1*

visionary behind the Morgan Hill Prairie Demonstration area and has worked many hours in it. She has assisted with the native plant garden development and design, National Wildlife Refuge Week events, and three annual youth fishing derbies. Margaret has led numerous birding tours, conducted Annual Audubon Bird Counts and butterfly counts. She has attended all general meetings and regularly keeps the visitor center open on weekends.



Margaret is not a new volunteer at Noxubee. Well before a Friends group was even considered, Margaret was busy helping with the protection and monitoring of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker on the refuge. She began volunteering on the refuge in 1990, and received her first Regional Director award in 1995. In 2004, Margaret received the President's Award for Life Achievement in volunteerism, exceeding 11,000 hours. In 2005 Margaret volunteered 1090 hours to the Service.

It is evident that these two talented women truly deserve the Director's Award. Congratulations to Florence and Margaret, and THANK YOU.

Margaret Copeland helps two young visitors during the Earth Day Celebration.

In the Manager's Corner . . .

Well, summer is upon us, and it has been hot and dry, as you all know. Fishing season is well in the swing with fair catches of bream, bass and crappie being reported and checked. The unusual spring weather we had seemed to put everything in slow motion. Bream bedded later, birds nested later and the turkeys did not want to cooperate with the turkey hunters. Oh well, just another interesting summer in the making.

I was delighted to announce last year's Regional Director's Award recipients for volunteers at our Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon held on April 22. Florence Box and Margaret Copeland were the recipients along with eleven other well-deserving individuals in the Southeast Region. The award ceremony was held on May 8th in Atlanta, but unfortunately neither was able to attend due to prior commitments. Be sure to congratulate them when you get the chance. At our luncheon we had forty-three Friends and volunteers in attendance. We had a lot of camaraderie and excellent food. The door prizes were fun, and the unveiling of our new "Friends bandana" was well received. Hope to see more of you next year!

The Friends' new "Saturdays at the Refuge" program has started off very well. Thanks to Buddy Laird, Bob Brzuszek, David Richardson, Jim Taylor, Joe Mulrooney, Lawrence Croft and Marion Sansing for helping make the planned events possible. I also want to welcome and give a special thanks to our new publicist Janis Bryant (662-323-2277), who stepped forward and volunteered at our appreciation luncheon. She has already started and has professional experience in this arena. Thanks, Janis.

I am looking forward to the new events scheduled this year and hope to see many of you out on "your" refuge. Don't forget to attend our general meeting on Thursday, June 15th, at 6:30 p.m. to hear Bob Brzuszek's exciting presentation on our local flora. See the insert for the current listing of "Saturdays at the Refuge" through November.

Henry Sansing

Ladies, Bait Your Hooks

Ladies of all ages, who want to learn about and get involved in fishing, will enjoy an informal session on the various types of freshwater fishing on Saturday, June 17, at the Noxubee Refuge Visitor Center. The types of fish you can catch, fishing methods and various tools of the trade will be displayed and demonstrated. After the in-class session, the class will move outdoors to a fishing pond. There you will be able to bait your own hook and try your luck at catching some catfish. If you have your own fishing pole, bring it; if not, we will have one for you to use. Call 323-5548, because registration is required. Meet at the visitor center at 9 a.m.

The 4th Annual Youth Fishing Derby, Saturday, June 10, 8 to 10 a.m. Call the Office at 662-323-5548 for directions to the new fishing pond. Come out and volunteer!

*******Mark your calendar! September 21, 2006, fall meeting of FONR.*******

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