

Research At Noxubee

MSU students are often given permission to utilize Noxubee Refuge in their research. Several students tell us about their work at Noxubee.

Amy B. Spencer, Ph.D. student; Major professor, Dr. Rick Kaminski

I am currently conducting a pilot study to evaluate crayfish populations in moist-soil wetlands. Moist-soil wetlands are managed for seed and tuber producing annual vegetation such as grasses and sedges. I am sampling crayfish, other aquatic invertebrates, and monitoring water quality to identify factors linked to harvestable populations of crayfish. These data will hopefully reflect an economical benefit, such as crayfish harvest, which would increasingly encourage landowners to manage moist-soil wetlands for waterfowl, other wetland wildlife, and crawdads. Lowland areas at Noxubee NWR are pivotal to my research. The photo at the top shows (l to r) me and Dr. Susie Adams, an aquatic ecologist with the U. S. Forest Service Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research, touring one of my field sites at Noxubee, Prisock field. Our efforts have definitely sparked some new interest in these amazing critters! For a look at the crayfishes found here in Mississippi go to <http://maps.fs.fed.us/crayfish/> a site recently launched by Dr. Adams.



Heath Hagy (left) and undergraduate student, Taylor Grothe (right) taking a core sample.

Heath Hagy, Ph.D. student; Major professor, Dr. Rick Kaminski

I utilize Noxubee in addition to Yazoo, Coldwater, St. Catherine's Creek, Overflow, Hatchie, Chickasaw, Lower Hatchie, and Morgan Brake NWRs for my research on winter moist-soil food abundance for waterfowl. I sample seeds, tubers, aquatic macroinvertebrates, and waterbird responses throughout winter with respect to fall mowing, disking, and no manipulation of robust moist-soil vegetation in seasonal wetland sanctuaries. I began my research in 2006 and have completed 3 field seasons (October-March) thus far. I am currently processing field samples taken to estimate the over-winter food abundances. This project will benefit bird watchers, waterfowl habitat managers, and hunters by increasing food resources and bird

use in natural moist-soil wetlands. In addition, I have conducted experiments supplementing this research to estimate the "giving up" density, a lower level of food at which waterbirds cannot efficiently find seeds, tubers, and invertebrates in moist-soil wetlands. This experiment will help the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture improve conservation planning efficiency and justify implementation levels of natural moist-soil wetlands.

**Jake Staub, Ph.D. student; Co-advised by Drs. Rick Kaminski (WF) & Andy Ezell (FO)
Justyn Foth and Alan Leach, M.S. students; Major professor, Dr. Rick Kaminski**

The goal of our research is to estimate red oak acorn and aquatic invertebrate resources in the hardwood bottomlands of Mississippi and other areas in the Lower Mississippi Valley. These are important food resources for wintering waterfowl, such as mallards and wood ducks, and for a large variety of other wildlife. We collect fallen acorns by placing traps and buckets under the canopy of red oak trees. In autumn 2008, we started our 4 year project at Noxubee NWR by placing traps and buckets in 40 locations in the refuge. Additionally, we have conducted an experiment which entails collecting acorns in flooded forests by using a garbage can sampler with the bottom removed and a battery-operated pump to remove water from the can. Due to its close proximity to campus, Noxubee NWR is a great outdoor laboratory for us, because it allows us to refine our sampling protocols, conduct scientific experiments, and collect important data beneficial for conservation. Results from our research at Noxubee will allow us to expand our sampling efforts to other areas in the Lower Mississippi Valley and ultimately provide managers and planners with reliable data on the abundance of food resources for waterfowl using hardwood bottomlands.



Alan Leach (left) and Jake Staub (right) are pumping water from a garbage can sampler. They then use a sweep net to collect acorns from the forest floor.



From The President

There is a feeling of relief at the refuge. The eaglets are flying! As you perhaps recall, my message in the last two newsletters has centered on efforts to construct an alternative eagle nest in hopes of enticing the eagles to move from the dead pine to a more secure nesting site. That was put on hold after the female began laying eggs much earlier than anticipated. The dead pine, however, did survive several severe spring storms and served the eagles well. Plans are now underway to construct the alternative nest in hopes the adult pair will adopt it for the next nesting season.



Photo by Lawrence Croft

Noxubee Refuge is a busy place and provides numerous opportunities for Friends members to become involved in activities. The Board of Directors and I are always seeking ways to help members become involved in projects. But, there is the real possibility that we have failed to contact some members who would enjoy volunteering.

Therefore, I encourage you to contact me at 662-323-6895 or

the refuge office at 662-323-5548 and ask how you may become involved. Some of the current activities are Trail Walkers who monitor maintenance needs, Youth Fishing Derby which is June 20th and will provide a great fishing experience for more than 100 youngsters, Native Plant Garden maintenance, Visitor Center weekend staffing, and July 4th canoe day.

Become an active member of Friends. You will find it rewarding. I hope to see you at the refuge soon!

~ by Larry Box

Who Are All These New People?

If your curiosity has been piqued by the group of young people on the refuge in khakis and gray shirts, they are a team from AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). They will be on the Refuge assisting us through the first week of July. AmeriCorps members dedicate ten months of their life going around the country doing community service through the Department of Health and Human Services. After completing the program, they will get an educational award that they can use to go to school or pay off some of their college debt.

This is the team's last project. Previously, the team worked with FEMA in Texas helping with Hurricane Ike relief effort and the Denver Public Schools tutoring elementary school students in an attempt to improve their standardized test scores.

The team has already been on the Refuge three weeks and has worked on a variety of projects. Week one they worked on boundary lines with Bobby Gentry. They have helped with habitat restoration, made new signs, cut out bluebird boxes, painted fences, and are currently helping reroof several Refuge buildings.

So far they seem to be enjoying themselves. I've seen them on the trails (even on their time off!) with bird books in hand, trying to identify the birds. One of the girls, Avery Doninger from Connecticut, even told me, "This is an amazing place. The Refuge is so beautiful, and it's a really great project to cap my year with AmeriCorps. Thank you." We're very lucky to have them; so if you see them around, don't hesitate to say hello!

~ by Henry Sansing

Noxubee Nature Store

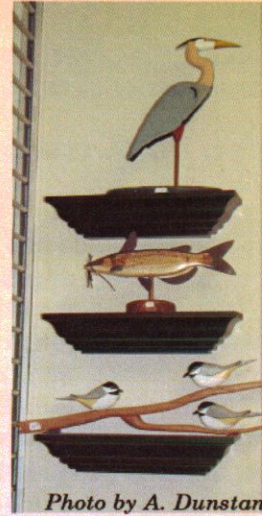


Photo by A. Dunstan

For years Bob Fye made wood carvings to sell in the Nature Store to help support refuge programs and activities. This photo shows the last few carvings made for the store before he retired.

STORE HOURS
MON-FRI 8:00AM - 4:30PM
SAT 10:00AM - 6:00PM
SUN 1:00PM - 5:00PM

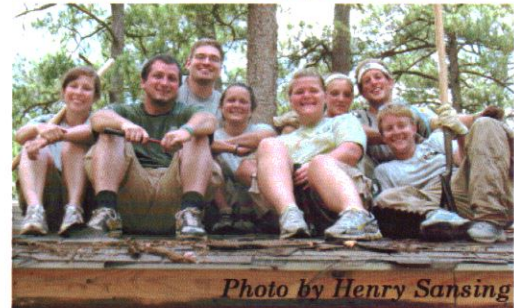


Photo by Henry Sansing

Which Binoculars To Buy?

Would you like to change the way you view the world around you? Good binoculars can do just that. The problem is there are tons of choices at various price levels. So, which ones do you choose? Let's look at choices in three price ranges, Inexpensive, Mid-Range, and Best of the Best.

Inexpensive: This is a tough one. I almost recommend not to buy "cheap" binoculars. They are more difficult to adjust and see through, often making usage frustrating. For this category, be prepared to spend between \$75 and \$125. Bass Pro Shops sells their Redhead Pursuit (8x42) for \$90. Other brands to consider would be Bushnell and Nikon. Bushnell offers the H20 Porro Prism line from \$100 to \$120 and the Nikon Action 8x40 runs around \$75. Stay away from the ultra compact, very low priced models. They are convenient but very difficult to see through. Spend just a little more for some that fit your hands and eyes. You will be more satisfied.

Mid - Range: You can spend \$250 to \$500 and own a very nice pair of binoculars. I prefer the Pentax DCF series and have owned both the 8x42 and the 10x42. The 8's are actually a little brighter and easier to hold still. You should be able to find these in the \$300-400 range. For the money, they are hard to beat. You should also look at the Nikon Monarch ATB series. These are similar in price and feel to the Pentax models.

Best of the Best: Get your pocketbook ready. Here is where you can make an investment in your outdoor experience. The big three are Leica, Zeiss, and Swarovski. The prices are the same...very high. They range from \$1500 to \$2000, but this buys an excellent pair of optics. If you spend a lot of time looking at birds or going to ballgames, these can almost change your life. They are ultra clear and they see things with incredible detail. The price is reflected in the excellent quality of the glass in addition to the polishing and coating techniques. Most of these units also come with Lifetime warranty. While shopping around, try the Leica Ultravids. They are absolutely beautiful. In the Zeiss products, try the Victory series and the EL series by Swarovski. I've tried the Swarovski EL 8.5x42 several times...just incredible.

Be sure to look through several pair. The choice becomes all about feel, especially in the hands and against the face. Good luck with your optics shopping!

~ by Jack McCarty

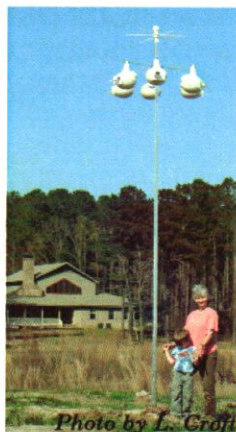


Photo by L. Croft

Saturdays At The Refuge



On May 2 at Noxubee Refuge Visitor Center, horticulturist Gail Barton, third from left, led an informal program on different methods for starting native plants in a home garden setting. Topics discussed included seed collection techniques, transplanting and nurturing seedlings, and taking cuttings and dividing plants. Barton, a Starkville native, is the Program Coordinator for Horticulture at Meridian Community College and the former owner of Flowerplace Plant Farm, a retail mail order nursery specializing in perennials, herbs and native plants. Each of the participants took home seedlings of dogwood, magnolia, cardinal flower, and hearts a bursting. Photo by Lawrence Croft.

Meet The Board: Margaret Copeland

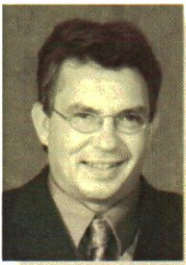


Margaret Sudduth Copeland of Starkville is a founding member of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge and one of the Refuge's most enthusiastic volunteers. An avid birder, she is an active member of the local chapter of the Audubon Society and the National Butterfly Association. Margaret has been involved in the Refuge's management of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker for "forever" and has volunteered countless hours monitoring individual birds, nests and populations. She received Regional Director's Honor Awards for her outstanding volunteer activities in 1995 and 2006.

On a more personal note, Margaret and her husband, John, have a son and two grandchildren. She is the receptionist and office manager for Copeland Clinic and also teaches a Sunday School class for two-year olds, her "favorite age to work with," at the First United Methodist Church in Starkville. As you can tell, she stays busy!

Margaret wants to encourage people to become volunteers. She said, "There is a peace and satisfaction that comes from being in nature and making a difference."

~ by Andrea Dunstan



Manager's Corner

Summer is coming on like a freight train. The rain, although welcome after the drought-like conditions of the last two years, has kept the staff from needed earth work such as grading roads, fixing the parking lots, and mulching and repairing some of the trails. However, things such as building maintenance, repair, and visitor use projects are keeping our plates full.

Nathan Kerschner, a native of Wisconsin, has filled the vacant Forest Technician position. Nathan began work on May 11th and he came with a "can do" attitude. We are proud to welcome him to our Refuge family. Not many people get to help wrangle-in, tie-up, load, and move a 11'4" alligator their first week at work, but Nathan was up to the task!

Another addition this summer is an eight person AmeriCorps crew out of Denver, Colorado (story on page two). This is our first year to serve as hosts for an AmeriCorps team and they are exceptional. They have worked on several different projects to date on the Refuge and we are planning to incorporate their help in future Saturday's on the Refuge programs. So if you see a bunch of new, bright and smiling faces on the refuge give them a "welcome y'all" and brag about "your Refuge".

The stimulus funding received in March has already been programmed to help continue our road work on the Refuge. Bids for the work through the Federal Highway Administration were advertised on May 7th and should commence in July. This work covers 18.4 miles of road and includes reconstruction of the road leading to Morgan Hill, asphalt overlay improvements on the remainder of the existing paved roads, and gravel road widening on Section Line Road. We are looking forward to getting these improvements underway, but be aware that some detours will be in effect in certain areas during the construction phase.

Upcoming Events

<http://www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org/>

June 18 - General Meeting; 6:30 PM; at the Visitor Center

June 20 - Youth Fishing Derby

July 4 - Canoeing at Bluff Lake 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

July 18 - Mississippi Mushrooms 8:30 AM

August 1 - Meteorology at 10 AM

September 17 - General Meeting; 6:30 PM at the Visitor Center

September 5 - Fun with Plants 10:00 AM

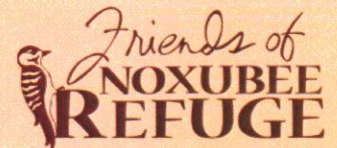
September 19 - Nature Photography for Kids & Teens at 8:00 AM

October 3 - National Wildlife Refuge Week Event at 10:00 AM

Our Saturday's at the Refuge programs are only getting better with time and I want to thank all of you who help develop, promote and instruct these programs. As always, your volunteer help is welcomed and appreciated.

Remember, it is through your participation, concern and thoughtfulness that we are blessed to have this Refuge to share, enjoy and nurture for present and future generations of people and wildlife. I certainly hope to see you all soon, enjoying nature on "Your Refuge!"

~ Henry Sansing



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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