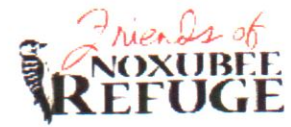


# Noxubee Notes



Volume 3 Number 4

September 2006

## Loakfoma Lake Drained, Work Required

Loakfoma Lake looks awful but it's (going to be) a good thing! The lake was drained this summer to rid it of hydrilla, one of the top 10 most invasive aquatic plants in the world, and to control American Lotus and other aquatic plants. In addition to hydrilla and lotus, watershield plants and dense mats of submerged coontail increasingly made the lake a less than desirable environment for fish, animals and humans. The most problematic plant, hydrilla, forms dense mats of vegetation that interfere with recreation and destroy fish and wildlife habitat. In three years, the non-native plant choked out more than 40 acres in the lake.



*Hydrilla Verticillata, stems are slender, branched and grow up to 25 feet long.*

The danger of hydrilla moving into Bluff Lake is very real. Hydrilla spreads by seeds, tubers, plant fragments, and turions (overwintering buds). One square meter of hydrilla can produce 5,000 tubers. (1 meter = 39 1/3 inches.) It is readily spread by waterfowl and boating activities. Once hydrilla becomes established, it can alter a lake's environment detrimentally by replacing native aquatic vegetation and affecting fish populations.

The necessary draw-down of Loakfoma Lake also will allow the refuge crew to improve the lake in several ways while performing needed general maintenance. The boat ramp will be rebuilt and the

water control structure renovated. Fish habitat will be improved by providing deeper water areas, ditches and structures in the lake. Lotus will be killed and hydrilla tubers removed by taking out the subsoil in the areas of infestation.

While it's a stinking mess right now, by next fall Loakfoma will be refilled, restocked with fish and rid of problem vegetation. Boating and limited fishing will be allowed in the spring of 2008. Be patient, remember this action was necessary and a more productive, enjoyable Loakfoma Lake will emerge.

## FONR Meetings Scheduled

The fall meeting of Friends of Noxubee Refuge is set for September 21, 2006, at 6:30 in the Tisdale Auditorium of the Visitor Center. Dr. Rick Kaminski will present a program entitled "Duck Food for Thought." Dr. Kaminski, Professor of Wildlife and Fisheries at Mississippi State University, will present results from his research that are relevant to the ducks at the Refuge and surrounding area.

The winter meeting of FONR will be January 18, 2007, at 6:30 in the Tisdale Auditorium.

Both meetings are open to the public, and everyone is invited to attend.

## Know Our Refuge Staff . . . Tom Jackson

Maintenance workers are like glue, they hold a refuge together. Without anyone to mow, plow, plant, paint, patch, clean, and without anyone to maintain water lines, buildings and equipment and assorted other tasks, the refuge would be in disarray.

There are more than 165 miles of roadsides and hundreds of small forest openings on Noxubee Refuge. Mowing alone can be an all consuming task even though openings are cut only often enough to keep down woody vegetation. Open spaces are a necessity for a diversity of wildlife.

One long-time maintenance worker on Noxubee is Tom Jackson, called Buck, but more about that later. He has worked on the refuge since 1979. Before coming to Noxubee, Tom worked at a cabinet plant in Louisville and on the Winston County road crew. Both jobs taught him some of the skills needed for the array of jobs his present position requires. In the 26 years since, however, he's learned to operate a wide variety of vehicles such as bulldozers and backhoes and knows how to perform many skilled jobs such as welding.

Tom sees his job as a good way to stay "in the great outdoors." He enjoys hunting and fishing but, of course, those activities are not part of his job. (That is contrary to a commonly held perception that if you work in the wildlife field, you get to hunt and fish all the

time. Just for the record, it's not necessarily so.) Tom also enjoys most sports, confessing to even watching golf!

A devout Christian, Tom and his family are very active members of Lonely Valley CME Church. He is the Sunday School Superintendent, sings in the choir and is a Steward. His wife, Janet, is the pianist. Married 22 years, Tom and Janet have three children: Sophia, Sabrina and Tom Cornelius. The two girls are in college, and their son is in high school. When talking to him, Tom's love for his family and wife is obvious. For example, he still sends flowers to Janet and NOT just on special occasions either.

Well, now the story of Tom being called Buck. While still in high school, Tom played on a "sand lot" basketball team. It seems that when he shot a particular way, he tended to kick up a leg. A fellow player said he looked like a buck deer, kicking up his heels. So he became Buck. He doesn't play sandlot basketball anymore, but Buck is a valuable part of Noxubee's maintenance team. Thanks for all you do.





## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The spring flowers have all gone, and the egrets' frantic activity in the rookery has subsided to a more leisurely pace. There is a quietness about the refuge as Lady Noxubee simmers in the summer heat and drought waiting for cool autumn breezes.

The Friends and refuge staff have been busy with Saturday Programs. The Fourth Annual Youth Fishing Derby was held June 10 at the newly constructed fishing ponds in Smith Field. The accessibility of the new ponds enhanced the enjoyment of 110 young anglers as they steadily caught fish during the half-day event. There were quite a few proud fishermen as they hauled some heavy stringers from the ponds. The following Saturday the first Ladies Bait Your Hook class was held with 15 in attendance. The morning started with Kris Godwin giving a presentation on fishing methods and tackle. Then the class went to the fishing ponds to put into practice what they had learned in the classroom.

Night Prowls were held on July 1 and August 5. Participants were treated to a brief lecture on owl and frog calls. Next they drove to the Trail of the Big Trees trailhead to listen to serenades from owls and frogs. The group then traveled along the road through the backwaters of Doyle Arm to search for alligators.

There were two special programs on July 15. Staff from the Mississippi Museum of Natural History gave two presentations on endangered species of Mississippi. Participants experienced habitat destruction during the hands-on activity "Shrinking Mississippi" and met a true survivor, an American Alligator. The morning included a concurrent presentation from Dr. John Guyton on nature journaling and sketching. Dr. Guyton's insights into journaling methods were accompanied by examples of journals that he has kept over the years.

The FONR Board finalized plans for Ray Watson's Memorial. Jack McCarty suggested that an audio-tour of native plants be developed for refuge visitors. The site for the tour will be along the trail from the Visitor Center to the Environmental Education Center. Frank Bonner has conducted a survey of plant species along the trail and is beginning to gather information on those species for a self-guided audio program that visitors can use to learn about the native plants of the refuge.

Upcoming Saturday Programs include a butterfly tour at Morgan Hill on September 2, a photo walk on September 16, canoeing at Bluff Lake on October 7, the National Refuge Week Celebration on October 21, and Paint the Fall Colors on November 4. I hope that you will take advantage of these educational opportunities.

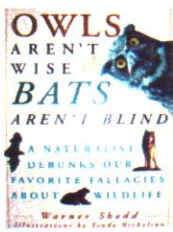
I also hope to see you at our next FONR meeting on September 21 when Rick Kaminski will present a program entitled "Duck Food for Thought."

Volunteers are always needed to staff the Visitor Center on weekends. Why not give it a try, I think that you will enjoy it. See you at the refuge.

Joe Mulrooney

## A Book Review

### *Owls Aren't Wise & Bats Aren't Blind* by Warner Shedd *A Naturalist Debunks Our Favorite Fallacies About Wildlife*



This delightful book on wildlife describes in a nutshell the characteristics and habits of 24 animals or families of animals. As the subtitle suggests, the book dispels some common myths about North American wildlife. Warner Shedd, a native Vermonter and retired executive for the National Wildlife Federation, shares his wealth of knowledge and refreshing personal anecdotes that elevate his writing to entertainment. There is some generally well-known information in this book, but there is also a wealth of fascinating and surprising facts about most backyard critters and some wilder species. A hunter and a conservationist,

Shedd steers a middle course with his earnest and straightforward writing style. His enthusiasm for his subject and Trudy Nicolson's beautiful full-page black and white illustrations of the animals make this an appealing book to a wide age range. Packed with humorous outdoor accounts and captivating facts, this book would be a great gift for boys who aren't usually fond of picking up a book. *Owls Aren't Wise & Bats Aren't Blind* is for sale at our Noxubee Nature Store.

This book review was provided by Marion Sansing. If you are willing to provide a review of a book, please send an e-mail to [jimjac@bellsouth.net](mailto:jimjac@bellsouth.net).

## ***E-Mail Addresses Important for Updates on Refuge Activities***

*We like to keep you updated by e-mail on current events or program changes at the refuge. Would you, or anyone else you know, like to be included on our e-mail list? (You do not have to be a member of FONR.) If so, send an e-mail to [marionsansing@aol.com](mailto:marionsansing@aol.com) with the subject: FONR e-mail list. If you have not received any announcements about our "Saturdays at the Refuge" programs lately, we do not have your current or correct e-mail address.*



# National Wildlife Refuge Week Celebration October 21

## FONR Volunteers To Assist Refuge Staff

National Wildlife Refuge Week will be celebrated at Noxubee Refuge on October 21 from 9-1. Activities of interest to all ages will take place in and around the Visitor Center. Exhibits and demonstrations are all free to the public.

One of the favorite booths, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, will again feature an immature American Alligator. Other returning activities include hand and face painting and live music performances.

The Nature Store will be open and selling interesting items and books. A number of new items have been added including some animal hand puppets that would make fun gifts or be nice to have around the house for visiting children and/or grandchildren.

Friends of Noxubee Refuge will join with refuge staff in presenting the varied activities. Each year larger and larger crowds have joined in the celebration. Help is needed in every area, so

call the refuge office now at 662-323-5548 to offer your services. It's a fun day for everyone. Tell your friends and family and come on out and join in the celebration.



Mississippi Museum of Natural Science's John DeFillipo, shown here during the 2005 celebration, will return this year.



## Early Birds Get the Worms

Want to be an early bird with your Christmas shopping? Then visit Noxubee Nature Store for nature related items.

Nature books  
Audubon birds  
Nature photographs  
Note cards  
Bob Fye's bird ornaments and wood toys  
Hand and finger puppets  
Bee's Best Honey  
Bookmarks  
Jewelry  
Wildlife pins  
And more . . .

## Magiscopes Add to VC Offerings



Two Magiscopes, easy-to-use microscopes, are now at the Visitor Center. Within a couple of weeks, they will be mounted with specimens for everyone to see. These microscopes add an interesting activity for young and old alike when visiting the Refuge. They are currently just outside the Nature Store. If you don't see them, just ask a staff member or volunteer.

Retired teacher and FONR Board member Sherrie Wiygul is responsible for this donation. Thanks to Bob Fye for mounting the microscopes and to Sherrie for procuring them.

## Help Wanted and Needed

Noxubee Notes is published four times a year. The position of writer/editor is now open. Please consider accepting this responsibility. Refuge staff members print the newsletter, and other FONR volunteers take care of the mail-out. So you see it is not a hard job. Contact Joe Mulrooney at 662-338-3129 or e-mail him at [jmulrooney@fs.fed.us](mailto:jmulrooney@fs.fed.us).

### More Help Wanted and Needed

- FONR volunteers staff the Visitor Center on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you can donate a day, please call *Barbara Crawford* at 662-323-2514 or the refuge office at 662-323-5548. You will be trained and work with an experienced volunteer until you feel comfortable doing it yourself.
- *Janice Bryant* is handling publicity for FONR. Please help her keep the public informed. Call her at 662-323-2277 when you need an activity publicized.
- The FONR website is maintained by Mark Goodman. The contact person for website submissions is *Lawrence Croft*. Call him at 662-323-8127 or e-mail him at [wlcroft@bellsouth.net](mailto:wlcroft@bellsouth.net)
- Activities listed in the accompanying "Saturdays at the Refuge" brochure need volunteers and participants. Please call the refuge office to see if you can help. Most importantly, check out the variety of offerings and participate.
- Trailwalkers walk the refuge trails monthly to keep them clear of trash and report major maintenance problems to the staff. *John Long* is chair of this project. Call the refuge office if you want to join his group.

### *Donations Have Been Given*

In Memory of Dr. Ray Watson  
By:  
Ann O'Hara B. Wilkiemeyer  
Sherrill Wiygul



## In the Manager's Corner . . .

It has turned out to be quite a scorcher of a summer. Recollections from friends and family cumulatively state, "It hasn't been this dry and hot for some thirty years." Even though the mid-day heat is keeping most people away from outdoor activities, the refuge is still getting some good use in the mornings and evenings for fishing, etc. Although it is still hot, the change of hues on tree foliage is whispering that "cooler days are near."

The dry weather has allowed refuge staff to complete work in several of the wetland areas that we normally have a hard time even getting into. Green-tree reservoirs, moist-soil units and problem beaver areas have had make-over work and improvements completed.

Loakfoma Lake is in the process of being drawn-down for important rehabilitation work, including vegetation control, boat ramp replacement and a major overhaul of the lake's dam and water-control structure.

The fires out west and in Texas have taken numerous refuge employees out on detail. We had seven employees on two-week details in numerous states such as Washington, Utah, California, Montana, Idaho and Texas. The Nation is at a Level 5 Fire Preparedness, the highest we have; so we expect more of our crew to be rotating in and out over the next few weeks. Keep them in your prayers.

Henry Sansing

## New Fishing Ponds Useful for Special Events

During the past year, the refuge staff constructed two new ponds for special use fishing events. Built in the Smith Field area, the half-acre ponds are gently sloped for safer access. Being located off the main roads also allows safer control of traffic through and around crowds. An adjacent parking area was also developed.

The ponds were used first in back-to-back weekends for the Fourth Annual Youth Fishing Derby and the Ladies Bait Your Own Hook workshop.

*Fishing Derby.* More than 110 participating youth, ages 5-15, and their parents enjoyed a morning of catfishing in the new ponds. Everyone caught fish and each registered participant received a goody bag and prize.

*Ladies Bait Your Own Hook.* The 15 participating women learned about game fish, casting methods, fishing gear and much more from Kris Godwin in a classroom setting. Then they went to the ponds and practiced their newly learned skills. Many positive comments were heard from the fisherwomen, some of whom had never fished before.

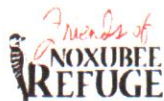
The Refuge staff will use the ponds for other special events, but they will not be stocked permanently for general public use.



People scattered around the new refuge ponds enjoying the 4th Annual Fishing Derby

**Editor's Note:** Great appreciation is expressed to Andrea Dunston, Gwen Cotton, Marion Sansing, Margaret Copeland, Lawrence Croft, Elsie Croft, Florence Box and others for the production of this and other newsletters. It wouldn't happen without you. Thanks.

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



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### FONR Levels of Membership

- \$ 15 regular individual membership
- \$ 20 family membership
- \$ 100 patron membership
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- \$ 250 life membership
- \$ 350 family life membership
- \$1000 sustainer membership
- \$5000 benefactor membership

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

For a membership application, call the refuge office at 662-323-5548 or go to the website:

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