

# FRIENDS OF NOXUBEE WILDLIFE REFUGE

FALL 2023

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Photo by: Vicki Maples

## Calendar of Events

What's coming up on your refuge

### **October 21: Refuge Day**

*A day filled with events for all ages - come celebrate the refuge with us!*

### **December 7: Nature Seminar Series**

*Allen Winters, a professional artist, engraver and traditional Choctaw flute maker will discuss the Choctaw culture and demonstrate his flutes. A soup & sandwich meal will be provided for all attending courtesy of the FoNR board.*

"Autumn teaches us the beauty of letting go. Growth requires release - it's what the trees do."

- Ka'ala

## WHAT'S NEW

WE'RE BACK!

*The newsletter is back on track!  
See what The Friends have been up to in 2023!*

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

*Artist Susan Lutz and her  
Springtime in Noxubee*

WORKSHOPS AND  
SEMINARS

*An update on all we have done  
so far in 2023!*

# A Letter from the President

Greetings Friends,

After this long and hot summer, fall is finally in the air, which is a great time of the year to explore our Refuge! I would like to encourage you to make time to walk our wonderful trails or boardwalks in the cool and quiet mornings. The Watson Trail, which has recently been resurfaced with gravel (which was provided by FONR), would be a great place to begin your journey. If photography is your passion, there is no better place, than our Refuge, to take nature photos. Be sure to post them to our Facebook page or on our website. We would love to see your pictures.

I am excited to announce that the Friends group is once again sponsoring Refuge Day. This will be a great opportunity to volunteer and ensure that the day is a success. If interested, please contact Linda Wells at [lmw218@pss.msstate.edu](mailto:lmw218@pss.msstate.edu) or me at [sfwatts83@gmail.com](mailto:sfwatts83@gmail.com).

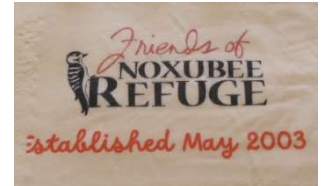
On your visits to the Refuge, don't forget to stop by the Nature Store and take a look at the unique items or Refuge t-shirts available for sale. These items make great gifts! Remember all purchases go to support our Friends group. Again, remember there is no better time to enjoy the transitioning of seasons, and no better place than the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Refuge.

See you there! - Susan Watts



## FRIENDS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS

In June 2023, the Friends of Noxubee Wildlife Refuge celebrated 20 years of service and support to the refuge since its incorporation in 2003. Over the years, the group has helped the refuge with various projects including the opening of the Nature Store, the establishment of the Watson Trail, and creation of the Sam D. Hamilton conservation scholarship. The Friends have also hosted a multitude of events for the public including various workshops, seminars, and nature-based activities. Celebration of these efforts was held with cake and acknowledgment of presidents past and present.



FONR Presidents (left to right): Lawrence Croft, Joe Mulrooney, Larry Box, Kara Roberts, Wayne Wells, and Susan Watts. Not pictured: Bob Fuller and Jim Taylor.

## CHANGES TO THE BOARD

While several changes to the board happened during COVID, in 2023 the Friends welcomed Stacey Parvin as our new treasurer! All our new board members can be found listed on our website: <https://www.friendsnoxref.org/>



# ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Our 2023 artist in residence, Susan Lutz, completed her residency at the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge in March. After her stay, she was asked if she would create another piece as a representative of the one at the refuge for the Department of Interior's permanent art collection. The original piece remains on display at the Visitor's Center, while a representative piece will now be on display at the Department of Interior art collection in D.C. The artist provides a description of piece below:



***Springtime in Noxubee*** is part of my on-going In Box Series. Each piece is a free-motion machine embroidered artwork composed of layers of polyester stretch velvet on a piece of black, recycled, synthetic packaging felt. The felt was once the protective covering for a kayak or canoe being shipped from a manufacturer to my friend's outdoor shop. The work was stitched using 100% black cotton thread. In the final step, the work is exposed to intense heat from an industrial heat gun. The space between the polyester stretch velvet shapes melts away in just a few seconds. This technique (which I developed myself) is very much like the prescribed burns done in the refuge. It transforms the area into something new and beautiful. In the "boxes" are stitched drawings of leaves found in the refuge. I used the "Autumn Leaves Scavenger Hunt" handout found in the Visitor Center. Although my visit was during the spring, all these leaves helped make my many walks more enjoyable. The colors I selected reflect the new leaves on the budding dogwood trees, the blooming red buds, and the light, sky blue that appears with every dawn over Bluff Lake. Thank you ever so much for the time and space for creative exploration, quiet contemplation, and new discoveries in nature.

## NATURE SERIES MARCH 2023

In 2023 we continued our Nature Series seminars at the refuge with an opener by Dr. Jeff Harris. Jeff spoke to seminar participants about birds and insects.





## BLUEBIRD WORKSHOP

In February, the Friends hosted a children's bluebird box workshop. This was followed shortly thereafter with a bluebird box



workshop for seniors in March. There were ~25 attendees between the two workshops and we hope those boxes are housing blue birds out there somewhere!



## HIKING THE APPALACIAN TRAIL

In June, Kyle McDill spoke on the Appalachian Trail as part of our Nature Series. A lifelong resident of Mississippi and an educator, Kyle shared his passion for hiking and the journey he and his wife took along the trail, which was completed in two-stages.



Kyle also has a passion for making the outdoors more accessible. He has spent time creating videos that allow others to view the hikes he is a part of. Videos can be found on his YouTube channel @thebeardedhiker.

## YOUTH FISHING DERBY



In April, the Friends hosted a Youth Fishing Derby at the derby ponds on the refuge. With help from refuge staff the ponds were stocked for the event and kids had a great time pulling fish after fish out of the waters! We had a great turnout this year with ~150 people and ~80 of those being youth participants!

## TOP SUMMER NOXUBEE SIGHTINGS

THERE IS AN APP FOR THAT!

### *iNaturalist*

1. American Alligator
2. American beautyberry
3. Eastern Pondhawk
4. Shining Sumac
5. White Ibis



### *eBird*

1. White Ibis
2. Common Gallinule
3. Black-bellied Whistling Duck
4. Anhinga
5. Great Egret



# ANDREA DUNSTAN RETIRES

## AFTER MANY YEARS OF AMAZING SERVICE

By Linda Wells

There have been many "faces" representing Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge over the years, but none as familiar as Andrea Dunstan. When you enter the Visitor Center, hers is usually the face you see, welcoming you with a smile and hello.

Andrea has a Wildlife Technology Degree from Abraham Baldwin College and started her career with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1987 at the Regional Office in Atlanta and soon moved to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge located in the Florida panhandle as a Park Ranger. From St. Marks she moved to Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge Center and continued her work as a Park Ranger in Visitor Services. Then, luckily for us, she applied for a position as Park Ranger for the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. That was in 1997 and the beginning of 26+ years at Noxubee NWR!

Andrea says the things she loves most about her job are the people she works with and the people she has met over the years. And the thing she finds the most challenging is staying motivated with all the regulation and policy changes.

A devoted wife and mom, Andrea's husband, Michael, is disabled and retired. She says he is a "jack of all trades" who loves to work on his truck and work out and has a goal of being the most in shape old geezer to put the college kids at the gym to shame!

Her son, Jacob, is 27 and has a degree and certification in electronics but changed direction and has his A & P license to work on aircraft. He is presently employed at Airbus Helicopters in Columbus, MS.



Photo: Andrea being interviewed for a local Louisville radio station



Photo: Andrea rescuing a bat from inside the visitor center

Daughter Katherine (Katie) we are all familiar with because she has been at the Refuge almost as much as her mom busily helping out with whatever is needed. Katie graduated last year from the Golden Triangle Early College High School with 62 hours of college credit. Katie is presently at MUW in Columbus and is majoring in Biology with a minor in art.

"Do you have any plans after retirement?" we asked her. Andrea said she plans to continue to help the Friends group by working occasionally at the FoNR Nature Store at the visitor center. Her major goal, however, is to clean out her house and prepare it for sale. She and Michael hope to buy

some land—"not sure where we are going yet", but they would like to get out of the city. "If anyone wants to join me in throwing a yard sale, let me know!"

Andrea's presence and influence at the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Wildlife Refuge will be deeply missed. Her knowledge and experience is as they say in those TV commercials "Priceless!" Thank you, Andrea, for your dedication, help and support. We love you and wish you and your family the very best in the years ahead.

## Acknowledgements for Andrea:

I have known Andrea since the inception of the Friends Group, and she's a "Jill of All Trades." She has done everything from arrange tours of the refuge to garden club ladies to hopping on a tractor and mowing grass. Andrea has also been invaluable when it has come to keeping the Nature Store open. She is a great source of knowledge and can get things done. She stays late or on Saturdays to help with events. At events like the kids fishing derby, she is usually the first one there with a vehicle loaded up with tents and tables and one of the last to head out. Andrea is going to take a world of refuge knowledge with her when she retires but based on past experience, she will never be able to retire completely because whenever a question arises, she will feel compelled to assist with what is needed. Andrea might want to take some advice when she retires if she is going to get some rest. That advice is go down her contact list and block a few numbers because the refuge could always use her help.

- Vera Taylor

With increased public use on Noxubee and the need to address it, I brought Andrea on as the first ever Public Use Specialist. She came in and provided much needed expertise in that area. Her title may have changed, but she still supported Noxubee through the years. Thank you, Andrea.

- Jim Tisdale

I first met Andrea in March 2001 when she was coordinating a bluebird nest box construction class for children. My oldest granddaughter (age 4 at the time) and I had the best time building a box and this was the beginning of our family enjoying the Refuge over the past 20+ years. The projects she has been involved in have impacted so many, children and adults, with education, recreation, wildlife and nature experiences. And she never forgets those she has encountered, as recently while packing up her pictures, crafts, etc. she found and emailed me a picture of my granddaughter and I building that bluebird nest box. Thank you, Andrea, for all the activities you have coordinated during your tenure, and I wish you the very best in retirement.

-Wayne Wells

Andrea has been a solid rock anchoring the Friends group since its beginning. She always seemed to know who to call or who could do "it." She has a ready laugh and a friendly attitude toward everyone. Her perseverance with grace while working through changes in personnel, government regulations, and other obstacles is inspiring. The Refuge just will not be the same without her!!

- Anna Marie Raspberry

Dear Andrea, Has it been 18 years? I guess so since Katie just graduated from high school! You were a great help to me in establishing the Noxubee Nature Store, an endeavor about which I knew nothing. You were always my go to person when I had questions, giving me good answers. Thank you for making me feel welcome working there. And you were always helpful working with Saturdays at the Refuge, Refuge Day, Canoe Day, the Native Garden, Fishing Derby....the list could go on! You were so helpful with just about anything the Friends dreamed up! Thank you. I will miss seeing you at the Refuge office, but I hope to see you on occasion. I wish you good health and new adventures as you begin your new adventure. Remember to "do it now" as the years will speed by.

- Best wishes, Florence Box

Andrea was my "go to" for info and help when I worked with the Friends newsletter and webpage. She was always willing to support whatever project we had going! As a Friend and a friend, I congratulate her on retiring and send appreciation for her years of service to Noxubee. Happy Retirement to Andrea.

- Jacque Tisdale



# OUR BIG UPCOMING EVENT

Come celebrate refuge day with us! The event will host a wide variety of information booths along with crafts and activities, music, and hot dogs!

**Free!**

## Refuge Day!



**Saturday, October 21, 2023 10:00 am to 2:00 pm**  
**Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge**  
<https://www.friendsnoxref.org/>

**Activities**  
**Exhibits**  
**Demonstrations**  
**Free hot dogs**

