

SPRING 2024

FRIENDS OF NOXUBEE WILDLIFE REFUGE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Picture: This male bluebird checks out this nesting box first and is soon followed by the female to give her approval (or disapproval)!

Letter from the president

----- LINDA WELLS

“Some old-fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat.” - Laura Ingalls Wilder.

I love this quote! After hiding inside during most of the winter, it is such fun to get outside and dig in the dirt, go hiking in the woods and smell the goodness of the earth awakening from her winter sleep. I think my favorite color is in fact “spring green.” The magic of bare, stark trees coming alive with leaves of green is so awe inspiring. Our beautiful Refuge is there for us to get out in the “fresh air and sunshine” and enjoy the flora and fauna that abounds.

We have a lot of exciting things coming up on the Refuge this year. We began some bluebird birdhouse making in February and our Spring Nature Series meeting in March. Dudley Phelps, FoNR board member and manager of Mossy

Oak Nativ Nurseries presented an interesting program on native plants, especially trees. Who knew you are supposed to plant an acorn laying on its side and not point down?

Coming up soon is the Kid’s Fishing Derby on April 20th. It is so much fun to watch a child catch their first fish! The Friends always enjoy helping the Refuge staff with this event.

We have an amazing Facebook page and website: www.friendsofnox.org. Many thanks to Kara Roberts, our communications director, for doing such a fantastic job. And, thanks to all of you who post photos and comments. For those who are willing, your pictures will help us this year as we revamp some of our promotional materials!

Your FoNR board appreciates all of you and looks forward to meeting you at the Refuge.

Kicking off 2024 with some bluebirds in mind

----- WAYNE WELLS

Children and Friends of Noxubee Refuge alike were excited the morning of February 10, as they began arriving at the Refuge Visitor Center to construct bluebird nest houses. Each child was given an unassembled nest box packet to build a nesting house with help from volunteers of the Friends group. They then took home the houses so they could place them for bluebirds – those eventual beneficiaries of the learning and building experience. The children were also given a pamphlet on bluebirds explaining their habitat and the importance of proper placement and care of the nest houses to have successful dwellers. A special thanks goes out to Refuge staff who made time to cut out all the necessary pieces, the volunteers who helped children assemble their houses, those who presented information on bluebirds, and the parents and friends for bringing children to participate. Hopefully some of the pictures have captured the fun, joy and sense of accomplishment that every child and adult received from the experiences. In a matter of a few days after the event I received some emails and pictures letting me know that bluebirds were already visiting some of these newly placed houses.



Picture: Busy with the build!



Pictures: Bluebird box builders with their completed projects!



Naure Series: March 2024

A knack for native plants

----- MELANIE BOUDREAU

Our March nature series at the Refuge was quite the humdinger! Mr. Dudley Phelps from Mossy Oak Nativ Nurseries gave a compelling talk about his passion for native plants.



Beginning, well... at the beginning, Dudley first spoke to the audience about the beginnings of Mossy Oak as a company – how local Toxey Hass, an avid deer hunter, began the oak nursery venture by simply being interested in why deer were attracted to certain oak trees. It sparked a desire to develop techniques that helped produce high quality oak seedlings which would eventually produce for wildlife.

Outside speaking about the oak nursery venture and how to best place and care for oaks, Mr. Phelps also spoke about his passion for native plants and the goal to help landowners move towards a more holistic ecosystem view.

For the southeastern US, that means encouraging the reintroduction of fire to the landscape to help create natural plant mosaics, as well as helping with the removal of non-native plants. The audience had much to learn from Mr. Phelps and he is more than happy to share his knowledge with those who want to make a difference in the stewardship of our local plant communities. More information can be found at:

<https://www.nativnurseries.com/>

and all are welcome to the nursery in West Point, Mississippi.

Former president acknowledged for outstanding service

----- LINDA WELLS

In recognition of Susan Watts for outstanding service as President of Friends of Noxubee Refuge 2022-2023, she was presented some artwork by the Friends groups. We have really appreciated all the hard work Susan has put forth in keeping the Friends going in our first year back post-COVID! Thank you Susan!!



Picture: Stacey Parvin presents Susan with her gift of appreciation.



Picture: Mr. Dudley Phelps giving a talk on Mossy Oak and his passion for native plants.

Some top environmental hurrahs

A positive way to start 2024

----- US NEWS

Not all environmental news comes with doom and gloom. Here are some of the top environmental wins to start off your 2024:

1. South Fork Wind powers up off the coast of New York with 12 turbines powering 70,000 homes and businesses. It is the first US commercial-scale off-shore wind farm to become operational.
2. The Florida Golden Aster is no longer endangered thanks to conservation and reintroduction efforts.
3. Scientists discover a rare sea lily!
4. De-paving continues to expand in places across the US, replacing concrete and asphalt with plants.
5. The race is on to recycle rare earth magnets in wind turbines with 20 teams working to create a circular supply chain!
6. Washington bans octopus farming before it can even begin given the unsustainable and damaging methods involved.
7. Google launched a means of mapping methane from space to help track emissions.
8. Over 8000 acres of wetlands in Alabama were purchased for conservation to the Nature Conservatory.
9. Seven more California condors are released into the wild from the Oregon Zoo – bolstering the remaining 500 animals left in the wild.
10. New study finds that plastic bag bans in the US are working, eliminate roughly 300 single-use plastic bags per person per year.

----- ENVIRONMENTAL HURRAHS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

1. France has declared that organic waste recycling is now mandatory and will be composted to replace chemical fertilizers.
2. The world's renewable energy capacity grew by 50% in a single year in 2023.
3. The Government of Canada has committed to achieving 100% zero-emission vehicle sales by 2035.
4. Spain is introducing seven new Marine Protected Areas, increasing protected waters from 12% to 21%.
5. India's tiger reserve becomes their first Dark Sky Park bringing astronomy fans a great view of the night sky.
6. PFAS will now be banned from cosmetics in New Zealand while cosmetic companies in the UK must now help clean their microplastics mess



Picture: One of the top sightings at Noxubee on iNaturalist this spring was the Green Anole – right alongside species like the Eastern Phoebe and the Mayberry. Photo by NPS.

UPCOMING EVENTS ON THE REFUGE

SOME DATES OF NOTE!

APRIL 20 – KIDS FISHING DERBY

MAY 18 – BIOBLITZ

JUNE 6 – NATURE SERIES

SEPTEMBER 5 – NATURE SERIES

OCTOBER 12 – REFUGE DAY

DECEMBER 5 – NATURE SERIES



We already have a few things in the books for the rest of 2024 including a kid’s fishing derby. You also won’t want to miss our Bioblitz in May which is a great way for citizen scientists to come out and learn about and help the USFWS catalog the variety of species found on the Refuge! We also have our quarterly nature series happening in June, September and November along with our large Refuge Day celebration in October which will feature a fun run! On top of these events, please make sure to keep an eye out for other things we have in the works including guided hikes!

