



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

JANUARY 2007 NEWSLETTER



Bahama parrot pair. Photo by Thomas White.

Technology transfer between the Puerto Rican parrot and the Bahama parrot

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Rio Grande, Puerto Rico Field Office has recently joined the Bahama Parrot Project as part of an international technological exchange between the Rio Grande Field Office, the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation, and Friends of the Environment-Abaco. The purpose of the project was to conduct a three-year experiment into alternative nesting structures for the Abaco population of the Bahama Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*). This bird presently nests in rock cavities, below ground. This is the only amazon nesting this way, and the behavior makes it vulnerable to predation, particularly from feral cats and occasionally from land crabs. As part of the Service's contribution, we shared the nest cavity model developed by the Rio Grande Field Office for the Puerto Rican parrot in both the Caribbean National Forest and the Rio Abajo Commonwealth Forest. The project has full support and approval by the Bahamas National Trust, and the Bahamas Department of Agriculture. Service biologist Thomas White provided technical assistance on a detail with the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation based in Loxahatchee, Florida, and helped install the nest cavities in Abaco Island. "The work went very well, and we were able to put out all 10 cavities in less than two full days," said White. "The monitoring during the upcoming nesting seasons will be handled by volunteers with Friends of the Environment, a cooperating

organization based out of Marsh Harbour, Abaco." "The Bahama Parrot in Abaco Island is so different from the Puerto Rican parrot in its nesting behavior that is hard to compare the two, but the nest cavities we use in Puerto Rico might be a viable solution to a different problem. We are not modifying or altering the natural cavities in any way, we are simply providing an option. It will be interesting to see if the parrots accept the nests" explained White.

Submitted by Lilibeth Serrano, Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office, Boqueron, PR

Partners working together for the recovery of the Puerto Rican crested toad

For more than a decade, the Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office has led conservation efforts for the Puerto Rican crested toad (PRCT). The PRCT was listed as threatened throughout its range in 1987. The decline of the species was related to habitat loss, over-collection, predation, and competition with invasive species. As part of the conservation efforts for the species, the Field Office hosted the annual meeting of the PRCT Recovery Team during the week of December 4, 2006. The team is comprised of a diverse group of partners coming together to track the progress in the implementation of the toad's recovery plan and develop a new Recovery Action Plan for 2007. The working group incorporates experts from the Service, state agencies, American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), several non-governmental organizations, academia, and private landowners. During the week the team shared data about FY 2006 captive propagation efforts, breeding events in the Guánica Commonwealth Forest, surveys conducted in historical breeding sites, and the construction of two release ponds. Representatives of Walt Disney's Animal Kingdom shared results on the nutritional research currently being conducted for the toad, and members of the AZA, who have 21 facilities involved in the captive breeding of the toad, shared information about their husbandry techniques.



Female PRCT found at the Manglillo release site. Photo by Carlos Pacheco

Several site visits were conducted to historical natural breeding ponds and release sites, as well as some potential future release sites. The week culminated with the successful release of over 1,700 tadpoles at the Manglillo release site located in the Guánica Forest. The tadpoles were bred in the Bronx Zoo, Fort Worth Zoo, and the Sedgwick County Zoo. The surprise of the evening was the finding of an adult female PRCT at the release site; evidence of recruitment and the success of the program. Additional release efforts were scheduled for February and May, 2007 at new release sites.

Submitted by Carlos Pacheco and Bryann Ybarra, Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office, Boqueron, PR

Behind the Scenes--



Merritt Island Refuge staff wrap Christmas gifts. Photo by Stephanie Odom

Merritt Island staff provides Merry Christmas

Working through a local charity, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge staff provided support for a local family this Christmas. Staff donations were used to purchase gifts and Christmas dinner for a single mother and three children. Refuge staff took the mother shopping for the children and wrapped and delivered the gifts. This is the tenth year that our staff has sponsored a family at Christmas.

Submitted by Ralph Lloyd, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, Florida

Bragging Rights --



Staffers Amanda Wilkinson and Max Latham at the Plaquemines

Plaquemines Parish Orange Festival in Louisiana a success

The Southeast Louisiana Refuges staff set up a display featuring Delta and Breton National Wildlife Refuges at the 60th year of this event held on December 2. Plaquemines is Louisiana's most southerly parish, where the Mississippi meets the Gulf of Mexico, and the area was heavily impacted by Katrina. Turnout was good at the festival's new location in Belle Chasse, and approximately 125 visitors stopped by our tent with a variety of questions. A display of common marsh plants found on Delta National Wildlife Refuge was a good lead-in for discussions about habitat and coastal restoration issues at these refuges. Migratory bird posters and wetland coloring books were popular give-away items.

Submitted by Byron Fortier, Southeast Louisiana Refuges, Lacombe, Louisiana

Mississippi River adventure expedition to be published in National Geographic Adventure Magazine

During the second week of November, National Geographic Adventure Magazine writer Kim Brown Seely, photographer Andrew Kornylak, and assistant Christine Kornylak spent a week canoeing the Mississippi River between Helena, Arkansas and Greenville, Mississippi. The trip was outfitted by John Rusky, Quapaw Canoe Company, Clarksdale, Mississippi, and Paul Hartfield, Jackson, Mississippi Ecological Services, served as expedition naturalist. Billed as an "adventure" expedition, it included all weather from cold rain and fog to warm sunny days, night paddling, dodging tows, and exploring back channels. An article on the trip is expected to be printed in the Spring issue of National Geographic Adventure Magazine. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Andrew Kornylak and Kim Brown Seely in the Lady Bug. Photo by Paul Hartfield.

Submitted by Paul Hartfield, Jackson, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office



Christmas on Chesser Island. Photo by Sallie Gentry.

Holiday observance celebrated at Chesser Island Homestead

The smell of home-baked cookies mingled with smoke from a bonfire greeted visitors during the annual Christmas on Chesser Island event held at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on December 9. More than 100 visitors donned coats, scarves, hats, and gloves to take part in this quaint Christmas observance. Luminaries and kerosene lamps illuminated the grounds and interior of the historic Chesser Island Homestead, while old-fashioned paper chain garlands and freshly cut wild holly graced the family Christmas tree, which stood next to a stone fireplace, complete with glowing fire. Just outside, A Christmas Tree for Wildlife, with popcorn strings, orange slices, peanuts, and pine cone bird feeders, stood as a tantalizing reminder that Christmas is truly a holiday for all. After a brisk hay ride under a star-filled sky, visitors enjoyed hot chocolate, apple cider, and home-baked cookies freshly baked from the homestead's authentic wood-burning stove. Many visitors made their own pine cone bird feeders at the craft table to take home, while singing of classic carols and a short play rounded out the night's event.

Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, Georgia

Old-Fashioned Cane Grinding Event held at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

More than 200 visitors came to Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on November 18, to take part in the refuge's Old Fashioned Cane Grinding Event. This interpretive demonstration provided a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of the Chesser family, who settled Chesser Island during the 1850's. During the event, visitors had the opportunity to cut their own cane right out of the homestead garden and then run the stalk through the manually-operated grinder. Children and adults alike volunteered to provide the needed mule power by pushing the sweep arm on the old grinder around in a circle. Many visitors watched as volunteers stoked a kettle-fire to boil down the cane to make authentic cane syrup. While waiting for the opportunity to take home a jar of fresh cane syrup, many visitors tried their hand at the old-fashioned Ring-n-Stick game, which provided entertainment for all. Fresh-baked biscuits, country ham, and sausage provided the perfect complement to the cane syrup and homemade jelly.



Volunteers grind cane. Photo by Sallie Gentry.

Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Folkston, Georgia



Cub Scouts from Pack 157 and Boy Scouts from Troop 156, Cookeville, Tennessee. FWS photo

Scouts take part in habitat improvement project

On Saturday, October 21, Cub Scouts from Pack 157 and Boy Scouts from Troop 156, Cookeville, Tennessee, took part in a project to help address erosion problems occurring in the creek located below the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. The project will help fulfill the requirements for the Cub Scout's Webelos II Den World Conservation Award and conservation training requirements for the Boy Scouts that participated. The Scouts hand-placed rock along eroded areas of the creek bank. A total of six tons of ballast stone and four tons of crushed limestone was used in the project. This project was a continuation of work initiated in 2004. The Scouts also stocked 500 rainbow trout into the creek after completion of the project. This project was organized by Hatchery Manager Andy Currie and Cookeville Field Office Ecologist Steve Alexander. Steve is the Cubmaster of Pack 157 and the Webelos II Den Leader. Steve's two sons Luke and Nate took part in the project. This habitat improvement project has resulted in better water quality in the creek below the hatchery and in the adjacent Obey River, thereby providing direct benefits to area trout anglers. The project also presented a unique opportunity to help instill in these boys a sense of environmental stewardship and serves as a good example of how good cooperation can result in good things being accomplished.



Conservation Project - Riprap placed along eroding streambanks of hatchery effluent canal. FWS photo.

Submitted by Andy Currie, Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery, Celina, Tennessee



Healthy pocosin wetlands, like these at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, have important wildlife habitat, nutrient storage and water quality functions. Photograph by Dale Suiter.

Pocosin wetlands being restored in North Carolina

The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have committed to the restoration of 6,000 acres of degraded pocosin wetlands in Washington and Beaufort Counties. Restoration will return the lands to a more natural state and sequester tons of nutrients, including nitrogen, which are a source of local water quality problems. Pocosins are unique wetlands, also known as southeastern shrub bogs; they are characterized by a very dense growth of mostly broadleaf evergreen shrubs with scattered pond pine. The typically thick layer of peat soils underlying pocosins are nutrient sponges over geologic time, locking-up nitrogen, phosphorus, and carbon in vegetation and the ever deepening soil layer. When pocosins southeast of Lake Phelps in North Carolina were drained for now defunct farming and peat mining plans, their nutrient retention functions were lost and some of the nutrients they held were released to adjacent waters. Once these lands became part of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Columbia, North Carolina in 1990, managers began restoring natural water levels. The new partnership with NCDENR accelerates the refuge staff's ongoing restoration efforts. Excess nitrogen from many sources causes water quality impairment in the Pamlico River and Pamlico Sound in North Carolina. The NCDENR has successfully worked with stakeholders in the basin for over a decade to reduce nitrogen loads to these waters. Mutual concern about potential impacts from large new nutrient sources to the watershed near Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge prompted a joint venture between NCDENR and the Service to restore wetland functions to about 6,000 acres of previously-drained pocosins with the goal of water quality improvement. This approach of off-setting new nitrogen loading in the watershed with an equivalent amount of local nitrogen reduction was recommended by the Service's Environmental Contaminants Program to minimize the potential for water quality degradation where nutrient enrichment is a recognized problem. The new partnership will return lands to a saturated condition, re-establishing their function as natural nutrient sponges. In addition to sequestering nutrients in the local airshed and watershed, restoration will enhance habitat for wildlife. The work, to be completed collaboratively by Pocosin Lakes and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges, will begin this year and run through 2008. For more information, please contact Sara Ward (sara_ward@fws.gov or 919/856-4520 x30) or [Pocosin Lakes NWR](#) (252/796-3004).

Submitted by Patty Matteson, Ecological Services, Raleigh, North Carolina

Rain Garden work day

Georgia Ecological Services staff worked together to spread mulch and plant trees at the new Rain Garden in Athens. This is a community project funded by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program with in-kind work from many local partners. The staff worked with students and professors from the University of Georgia to design the rain garden to show the importance of retaining urban storm water onsite to reduce flooding and sedimentation in streams. Georgia Ecological Services is working with developers to incorporate such rain gardens and other bioretention features into new developments in the Etowah River Basin to protect endangered fish in the streams.



Alice Palmer, Keith Hattie, and Steve Holzman Planting Tree
Photo by Deborah Harris.



Sandy Tucker, LaWanda Dixon, and Alice Palmer Moving Mulch
Photo by Deborah Harris.

Submitted by Deborah Harris, Ecological Services, Athens, Georgia

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery mid-point viewing area for Operation Migration

On November 22, 2006, the Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Jamestown, Kentucky was a public viewing site for Operation Migration. The hatchery served as the mid-point public viewing area for the 1,250-mile Whooping crane migration between Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin and Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. With the stopover point just across the Cumberland River from the hatchery, the hatchery area provided the public a great opportunity to watch the take-off, a spectacular flight over Lake Cumberland, and a great view as the group disappeared over the horizon. More photos in [Photo Album](#).



Submitted by James Gray, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky

Operation Migration. Photo by James Gray.

Hats Off --



Mike Bryant (center) presents "Volunteer of the Year" awards to Angie Brady-Daniels and Sue Carroll of the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce. Photo by Jim Gilbert

Angie Brady-Daniels and Sue Carroll named refuge volunteers of the year

At the Annual Refuge Volunteer Awards ceremony on November 18, 2006, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Manager Mike Bryant presented Refuge Volunteer of the Year plaques to Angie Brady-Daniels and Sue Carroll of the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce. Bryant recognized these ladies, not only for their tireless and long-term effort with Wings Over Water for the past 10 years, but also for the ongoing roles they play as refuge ambassadors and advocates.

"Since the first Wings Over Water Celebration in 1997, the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce has been a major partner with the Service in eastern North Carolina, both in WOW and as a community advocate for national wildlife refuges. Two key staff, Angie Brady-Daniels (Vice President for Public Relations) and Sue Carroll (Girl-Friday/Administrative Assistant), have set themselves apart as friends and advocates of Alligator River and Pea

Island National Wildlife Refuges," said Bryant. "Their love of and appreciation for national wildlife refuges is well-known in eastern North Carolina."

Since WOW began, Sue Carroll has handled registration for the festival. In this role, she has had friendly conversations with more than 3,000 people, getting to know their likes and dislikes, learning about the more than 100 trips offered during the event. Sue has been the Wings Over Water ambassador and is likely a big part of the reason people return year after year for the November event. She has a quiet, unassuming manner, a well-practiced, customer-service attitude, and a professionalism that makes her perfect for the tedious job of wading through all the WOW possibilities with Outer Banks visitors.

"Angie Brady-Daniels has her finger on the pulse of the business community. She is well-respected and trusted by the over-1200 members of the Chamber. She has both an economic savvy and a devotion to chamber members that helps the WOW steering committee to make plans that will both highlight the refuges and the resources, but also benefit the community economically," said Bonnie Strawser, volunteer coordinator for the refuge. "Angie brings to the table a clear perspective on how refuges and businesses can help each other. She is a strong advocate for national wildlife refuges and isn't afraid to ask businesses to help us. And, she has the influence to make it happen."

"In the 10 years since WOW has begun, the Chamber has registered over 2500 participants with full, complicated schedules for the 6-day festival. They have processed over \$150,000 in the process. I have yet to hear of a single dissatisfied customer," said Bryant. "Having the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce as a partner and advocate for refuges has had a major impact on relationships between the Service and the community - and it's all due to the hard work and great attitudes of these two Chamber employees," Bryant concluded.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, Manteo, NC

Photo Album --

Mississippi River adventure expedition to be published in National Geographic Adventure Magazine -- more photos



Guide/outfitter John Rusky, Kim Brown Seely and Andrew Kornylak break camp and prepare for another day of adventure. Photo by Paul Hartfield.



Andrew, Kim and Christine break through a back channel willow/cottonwood break near the mouth of the Arkansas River. Photos by Paul Hartfield.



The Mighty Quapaws, river apprentices, joined Kim and John for a part of the first days float. Photos by Paul Hartfield.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery mid-point viewing area for Operation Migration -- more photos



Operation Migration. Photo by James Gray.



Operation Migration. Photo by James Gray.



Operation Migration. Photo by James Gray.

Visitor Services --



Keith Boliek. Photo by Chuck Ryan.

Pressure cleaning the budget at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

Tightening budgets are a little less pressure at Arthur R Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. When a contract request to pressure clean the Cypress Swamp boardwalk came back at too high a price, Assistant Manager Rolf Olson invested in the required equipment and asked for volunteers from the staff to help. Joining the intrepid and somewhat wet volunteers are Jean Ryan, Matt Harwell, Keith Boliek, Donatto Surratt, Cindy Fury, Tiffany Trent, Jon Wallace, and Grant Gifford. George Peltz, Steve Matzkow, and Allen Hansen from the maintenance staff assisted too. Even Rolf Olson took his turn at the pressure cleaning! These volunteers saved over \$3,000.

"It was fun because you could actually see immediate results," said Cindy Fury. "Our visitors appreciated it as well despite the noise!"

Submitted by Chuck Ryan, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach, Florida



Matt Harwell. Photo by Chuck Ryan.



Jean Ryan and Tiffany Trent.
Photo by Chuok Ryan.

Wage Grade Profile --

No one featured this month, check back next month.