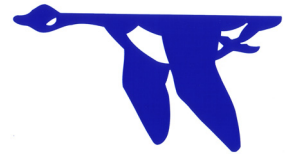


Noxubee News



Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge News

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Noxubee Refuge Has a New Assistant Manager

Kimberly Sykes has been selected as the new Deputy Manager for Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Originally from Winona, Mississippi, Kimberly attended Mississippi State University, where she received Bachelors' degrees in both Forestry and Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. She also received a Masters' degree in Forestry, with an emphasis in bottomland hardwoods, from the University of Arkansas at Monticello as well as a Masters' in Business Administration from Texas A&M in Texarkana.

Kimberly has experience in managing wildlife and forest resources across the Southern United States. She worked for International Paper Company in Arkansas and Texas managing both pine and hardwood forests. While with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kimberly has worked in Mississippi and Western Tennessee. She enjoys hunting, gardening, and cooking in her spare time. Kimberly's appointment to Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge Complex fills a position that has been vacant for over a year, and she is certainly a welcomed addition.



Deer and Waterfowl Hunts Reach Harvest Highs

The recently ended deer season and waterfowl hunts on the Refuge resulted in higher than normal harvests. The deer harvest reached 590 animals being taken during the combined Archery, Primitive Weapons, and Gun Seasons. This was on average 100 more deer than taken during the



Exceptional pibald deer taken on November 29, 2008

past 10 years. After several years with reduced harvests, the increased opportunity with the availability of management buck tags through the Deer Management Assistance Program, and exceptional weather conditions all favored a higher than normal deer harvest. Hunter participation remained stable and more importantly, no hunting accidents were reported. Though the harvest was the second highest recorded on the refuge, the increase is not likely to effect opportunity this fall. Deer populations are dynamic and hunter success is largely a function of weather conditions and opportunity. No major changes are anticipated for the upcoming deer season.

Despite some very poor waterfowl hunts attributed to the extreme flooding this past fall and winter, the waterfowl harvest reached over 900 birds for the season. This was the highest total harvest recorded. Early in the season, wood ducks comprised the majority of the birds being taken. However, on the last hunt of the season in January, 117 ducks were harvested with most being mallards.



Eagle Family as of February 15, 2009. Photo by Lawrence Croft.

Artificial Eagle Nest Delayed

Friends of Noxubee Refuge have agreed to come to the aid of the pair of eagles nesting on the Refuge. Their nest tree died in 2006 and has slowly been falling apart one branch at a time. Although the eagles successfully nested in the tree in 2008 producing 3 eaglets, only time will tell if the nest is going to survive another nesting season. The eagles began incubating eggs a few weeks prior to Christmas, and the eggs have recently hatched. This has prevented a contractor from scaling an adjacent tree and constructing a starter nest for the pair. Every wind storm and heavy rain over the next several months could result in a catastrophic collapse of the nest. If the nest falls, the artificial nest will be constructed within a few days and the nestlings placed in the new tree.

Road Work Continues As Projects End and New Ones Begin

Two years after working with and providing a grant to Noxubee County, we see the light at the end of the tunnel. The project included the paving of the Bluff Lake Road from Morgan Hill to Lynn Creek Road, heading towards Brooksville. This 3.1-mile stretch of formerly gravel road came to completion on November 4th, 2008. We now provide paved access to Noxubee Refuge from Highway 45 through Brooksville .

We have also provided a matching grant to Winston County for the paving of the 2.3-mile Loakfoma Road from Highway 25 into the Bluff Lake/Louisville Road. The work should begin this summer and hopefully be completed by fall. This

project is a partnership with Winston County, who was able to use the Refuge funding as a match to levy State Aid funding of 75% to complete the project.

Our thanks for getting these projects completed go to Senator Thad Cochran whose efforts and support provided the Refuge with \$1.3 million in transportation funding earmarked “to provide access to the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.” The funding was used in both Noxubee and Winston counties to continue the Refuge’s effort to provide paved access to the public.

Other work to begin this summer is rebuilding a portion of the road leading to Morgan Hill in Noxubee County and pavement overlay work on most of the current roads in Oktibbeha and Winston counties. This work is being conducted with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and with their engineering assistance.

Additional projects were planned, but price increases substantially limited the work that could be done with the available funding. We will strive to get as much accomplished as possible.



Forestry Update

During the winter months, the forest harvesting operations are shut down due to wet weather and the soil types of the flatwoods. Heavy equipment would cause deep ruts in our soil types which would be harmful to the Refuge’s ecological system. We are at this time inventorying four forest management units of the Refuge’s twenty-eight units. The inventorying is being coordinated with the prescribed fire program. Both programs are active and ongoing at the same time.



Tree Bits Beech Trees

Early America settlers called beech trees “Indian Umbrella trees.” The tale was that Native Americans sought beech trees out to hunker down under during lightning storms with the belief that lightning did not strike beech trees. Also, the limbs of beech trees are angled downward with the lower branches resembling umbrella limbs.

Beech tree leaves turn a golden brown in the fall and persist on the lower branches throughout the winter. The tree is very easy to recognize in the winter because of the persistent leaves and limbs angled down.

Beechnuts were eaten by Native Americans and to a lesser extent by the early colonists, when more desirable food sources were scarce. The nuts are mildly toxic and have a high level of tannin, making them less desirable than alternative walnuts and hazelnuts, which were also consumed. These nuts are eaten in quantity by wildlife, especially squirrels, raccoons, other mammals, and game birds.

The bark on older trees is comparatively very smooth, and white with a greenish tinge. The residences of Greene County, Mississippi called the beech trees “money trees,” because of the bark color and smoothness. The bark retains wound marks for many years. Thus, many beech trees have some combination of names, initials, dates, or hearts whittled in the bark.

Wildlife Factoids

Female birds of prey typically are larger than the males. However, this is not always an obvious size difference.



Bats are the only flying mammal; flying squirrels actually just glide

Virginia opossums are the only marsupial (pouched animal) found in North America.



Moose are the largest deer in the world. Bull moose can weigh over 1500 pounds.

Some nine-banded armadillos carry leprosy



Calendar of Events

March 7 - Annual Bluebird Workshop

We hope to encourage young birders by inviting parents to bring their children for this workshop. The morning includes an information session on the Eastern Bluebird, a video and building a bluebird box to take home. Come out and join the fun and maybe learn a few things too! 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Space is limited so call for reservations.

March 21 - Astronomy For Beginners

What better place to stargaze than the Refuge, the second darkest location in Mississippi? Professor Lawrence Croft will lead a slide illustrated discussion starting at 6:45 p.m. and with hopes for clear weather, we will go outside to observe the celestial sphere after 8 p.m. Dress warmly and if you wish, bring binoculars or a spotting scope. You may call the Refuge at 323-5548 between 6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to find out if the weather will permit outside observations. Starts at 6:45 p.m. inside the Visitor Center

April 4 - Nature Journal: The Art of Seeing

Robin Whitfield, a Grenada artist and naturalist, will inspire participants to explore drawing and experimental techniques as a way to “see” and actively engage the natural world. This workshop is for anyone who loves and is curious about nature and the natural world. It is designed to help participants develop skills and ideas about ways to create a deeper sense of place. Weather permitting, the workshop will be conducted outdoors. In inclement weather, it will take place inside the Visitor Center where there will be plenty of materials and subjects to use. Participants should be prepared to be outside all day if the weather is favorable; bring a hat, insect repellent and a portable chair/stool. Please also bring your lunch, a water bottle, your favorite sketching tools and a clipboard. We will have paper and extra art supplies available for you. For more information on Robin, visit www.robinwhitfield.com. Meet at the Visitor Center, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

April 18 - Celebrate Earth Day

Come out to the Refuge on April 18th and celebrate Earth Day with us! A fun-filled family day with great hands-on activities to raise awareness and make our planet a better place. Some of the activities will include reusing plastic bottles to make bird feeders, creating art from trash, and learning about endangered species on the Refuge. You can bring your aluminum cans for recycling, the proceeds will help support Refuge programs and activities. All activities will start at 10 a.m. and continue until noon at the Visitor Center.



May 2 - Bugs, Bugs, Bugs

Join us for a buggy night of collecting and identification with Dr. John Guyton. We will start with an introduction to nocturnal insects. Afterwards, we will visit some black light collection sites and demonstrate how to collect and classify. Developing an insect collection is a fundamental exercise in gaining appreciation for and a better understanding of the diversity of this region’s unique fauna. Although insects are plentiful, we will avoid collecting rare or unusual species.

At the Visitor Center 3:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

May 16 - Endangered Species Day

A day of activities and information. Learn about the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker here at the Refuge and a few success stories as well. We will make crafts too! At the Visitor Center 10 a.m. to noon.

June 6 - Ladies Bait Your Hook

Ladies of all ages, who want to learn about and get involved in fishing, will enjoy this informal session on the various types of freshwater fishing. The types of fish you can catch, fishing methods and the various tools of the trade will be shown and demonstrated. After the in-class session, the class will go outdoors to a fishing pond. You will be able to bait your own hook and try your luck at catching some catfish. If you have your own fishing pole bring it, if not, we will have one for you to use. Registration is required. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m.

June 20 - 7th Annual Youth Fishing Derby

The fishing derby will be held at our two fishing ponds, stocked with catfish for the event. Their grassy banks make fishing safe and easy. Children ages four through fifteen must pre-register to participate, or may register the morning of the derby. There are two types of registration: \$10 with a rod & reel provided or \$5 without. Prizes will be awarded in all age categories for the heaviest fish and heaviest stringer of fish. Each registered child will receive a goodie bag and prize. Follow the signs to the ponds. The derby starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 10 a.m.