

Noxubee News



Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge News

Issue 13

Spring 2004

Noxubee Refuge Has A New Manager



Henry R. Sansing, originally from Columbus, Mississippi, became Noxubee's new manager in February 2004.

Henry is no stranger to us as he began his Service career as a cooperative education student while attending Mississippi State University in 1988. He was hired into the program at Noxubee and completed his first work assignment at Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina. When he graduated in 1989, he went to work as a forester at White River NWR in Arkansas. Since then, he has been in the refuge manager series stationed at Lower Suwannee, Cedar Keys, and Lake Woodruff refuges in Florida and Sequoyah and Ozark Plateau refuges in eastern Oklahoma. He has paid his dues and has now returned to Noxubee, MSU, and his family in Columbus. Help us welcome Henry, his wife Marion, and their 19-month old son Sidney to Noxubee.



Office/Visitor Center Update

The new office/visitor center is now open, however most of the signs still indicate the Refuge office at the former location. Please bear with us during our transition. We will be updating and replacing signs as an ongoing project. Come by and see the new building we are happy to show visitors around. As soon as all the exhibits and Refuge video are completed and installed we will be holding a grand opening. Keep your eye out for announcements of this event. You won't want to miss it!

Refuge Recruiting YCC

Noxubee Refuge is looking for a few good young men and women to work in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Program this summer. The program runs for 8 weeks during the summer and is considered to be a work-learn-earn program. To be considered, the young people must be at least 15 and not older than 18.

The enrollees will participate in a variety of work projects, including repairing and replacing fences, cleaning Refuge recreation areas such as boat ramps, mowing and trimming grass, servicing machinery, and assisting the refuge biologist in trapping and banding wood ducks. Most of the work will be done outdoors and the enrollees will have a chance to develop several job skills during the course of the program.

Forestry News

In March the Refuge fire crew completed approximately 4500 acres of prescribed burning. These burns help maintain the habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker by reducing leaf litter and controlling brush in the understory. These burns also benefit most native wildlife by creating foraging area during the spring green-up. We plan to conduct several small growing season burns later in the year.





Dan O'Keefe and paddlefish

Paddlefish Swims Back

In summer 2003, graduate student Dan O'Keefe caught a paddlefish below the Bluff Lake spillway for part of his research into the breeding biology of the species. The fish was taken to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Private John Allen Hatchery in Tupelo to be used in a captive spawning project. Later that summer, the fish was implanted with a tracking transmitter and released into the Tenn-Tombigbee River at the Demopolis Pool.



Healed scar from surgical insertion of transmitter

During the third week of March 2004, the fish began a journey back to the refuge. It traveled some 50+ river miles up the Noxubee River and then several more miles up Oktoc Creek before ending the journey back at the Bluff Lake spillway. Though far from the journey salmon take to reach their spawning grounds, the movement of this one paddlefish is nonetheless an interesting note about the movement of the species.

Eagle Nest Unsuccessful

In 2003, nesting of a Bald Eagle after an absence of 50 years was quite a highlight for the centennial celebration of refuges at Noxubee. However, in 2004, the pair of eagles on the Refuge was unsuccessful. A broken egg was found beneath the nest but appeared that the egg had not hatched and was possibly predated. The nest was inspected from the air in March and no adults were on the nest and nothing was seen in the nest. The pair of eagles continue to be seen flying over Bluff Lake and Doyle Arm. Hopefully, the pair will nest again in 2005.



Roads And Bridges On The Mend

Three main bridges coming onto the Refuge from Oktoc Road have finally been completed after months of delay. A fourth bridge near Loakfoma Lake was also recently replaced with pre-formed concrete panels. Repaving of the approaches to the bridges will be done in the next couple months along with several other sections of road making access much easier.



Bridge near Loakfoma Lake

Winston County has begun a major road project from Bevils Hill to the Noxubee County line on Bluff Lake Road. Six miles of the road are being prepared for chip-and-seal. However, the resurfacing may not be done until 2005 to ensure the road has completely settled following the dumping of >40,000 cubic yards of fill dirt. Access from Highway 25 may be difficult during rainy weather for the next few months.

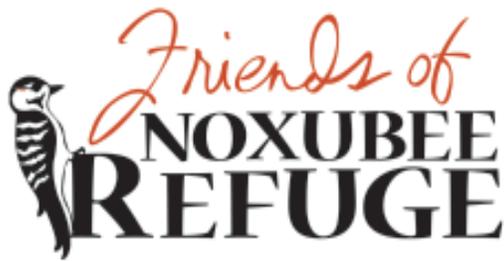
Two bridges just outside the refuge entrance from Oktoc Road are slated for replacement by the county this spring or summer. A detour to access the Refuge from Oktoc will route folks down the Logan road near the District 5 volunteer fire department.



Two bridges to be replaced soon

After all the work is done, Noxubee Refuge should be a much more user-friendly place to visit, or at least it will be more accessible.





Five members of the Friends Of Noxubee Refuge (FONR) and two members of Refuge staff attended the Southeast Regional Friends Workshop held in Monroe, Louisiana. Most all of the friends groups from throughout this region were represented. Lots of ideas were exchanged and gleaned from the breakout sessions and networking. Everyone left with new enthusiasm, energy, and ideas for the future.

The next meeting planned for the FONR will be at 6:30 pm, April 27, at the new office/visitor center. Dr. Bruce Leopold, Department Head of Wildlife and Fisheries, will present a program focusing on predators of Mississippi, the bobcat in particular. All visitors are welcome. Come out and see what the Friends Of Noxubee Refuge is all about!

The first FONR newsletter will soon be published. For more information about FONR please contact the Refuge office at 323-5548.



Note:

- Final copies of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Noxubee Refuge have been received. If you would like a copy contact the Refuge office at 323-5548.

- If you have any suggestions for events, activities, or tours you would like to see offered on the Refuge please let us know.

Staff Notes



Jeffrey Fortenberry, Forestry Technician, resigned on March 5th to return to school.



Julie Bennett, Forestry Technician, also resigned on March 5th. She and her husband relocated to Searcy, Arkansas, for her husband Jeremy to work as Assistant Manager at Cache River NWR. We will miss her help and cheerfulness around the office, and wish her luck job hunting. The Refuge is currently in the process of advertising these two positions.



Calendar of Events

May 28: *Canoe Trip through the cypress* - This is a must-see for bird watchers and people who enjoy wetlands. We will depart from the

back of Bluff Lake and canoe along the peninsula. This area is full of lily pads, cypress, and other aquatic dwellers. The wading birds like this area, and the cattle egret rookery should be starting up. We will tour the shoreline then continue to the rookery for a unique wildlife observation experience. Call 662/323-5548 for more information or if you would like to reserve a canoe (there are only 5) and join the adventure! More trips will be scheduled as the summer progresses. (May 7th is FULL)



June 12: *Noxubee Fishing Derby:* The location will be the same: the Bluff Lake spillway and we will require pre-registration for participants. Space is limited to 125 children ages 4-15. There is a registration fee, \$10 includes a rod-n-reel or \$5 without the rod-n-reel. The derby will run from 8AM to 10AM and the spillway will open to all children 15 and under after 10AM. The spillway will be open for adults to fish in the afternoon. There will be prizes for the largest fish (by weight) and for the smallest fish (by weight) in each age class (4-9 and 10-15). Contact the Refuge office for a registration form or come by during business hours (M-F 8-4:30) to register in person. Spaces will fill up fast!



Comments?

If there are topics you would like included in the next issue, please feel free to contact us and suggest topics. If you would like to contribute an article or information concerning partners or projects (present or future) on the Refuge, please let us know. This newsletter is provided free to all interested persons, and if you would like to be added to the mailing list please contact us. You can call us at 662/323-5548, check out our website at <http://Noxubee.fws.gov> or email us Noxubee@fws.gov.



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