

FOR THE BIRDS

By Tom Gregory

Recently the wife made a long trip to Arkansas to buy a goffin cockatoo. She claimed that it was a really good deal and worth the trip. Since I know very little about goffin prices and being the husband, of course, I agreed that it was a very good deal indeed. After returning home she had to get up early with only four hours of sleep to make another trip up north. She made a nonchalant comment that getting up that early was for the birds. Naturally the profundity of the phrase was appropriate and amusing, but I knew better to make any kind of smart remark that early before coffee.

Thinking of the phrase “for the birds” got me to thinking how I have often heard it used regarding one of the main purposes of the wildlife refuges. Obviously since this phrase did not originate with protecting birds, how did it get started?

A little computer research determined it has been around a very long time. A little more research turned up a probable origin based on turn of the century (pre-automobile turn of the century) life that is best not discussed in detail any further. Therefore, I will only examine how Noxubee Refuge is “for the birds.”

First and foremost is the RCW Program. The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker is approximately seven inches long with black and white horizontal stripes across its back and a black cap and nape around large white cheek patches. I used to see these birds often in the Mississippi woods while growing up. Grandpa called them sapsuckers because of their habit of pecking holes in trees and making the sap run. Seems these birds are now running out of places to call home. Nowadays you rarely see any because there are very few big trees, especially big old pine trees, for them to peck on and make a cavity.

Almost everywhere in this part of the country are pine tree farms growing in briar patches where it is almost impossible to even walk through and certainly not habitat for anything but ticks. This is the reason the restoration of bottomland hardwoods by the Refuge and the RCW program is so important for us and the RCW.

The Refuge RCW clusters are one of only four such sites in the state. The clusters can easily be located by spotting the active cavity trees while driving through the Refuge. These trees are easily distinguished by their painted white bands and sometimes even the running sap by the cavity will be visible. The best time to see the red-cockaded woodpecker is around sunrise or sunset during the nesting season from late April to mid-June. The staff at Sam D. Hamilton is committed to the RCW program and can explain it in much more detail.

Some may question why the Refuge makes so much fuss over the RCW and the other endangered species, as well. The way I see it, if our modern culture cannot prevent the extinction of the little “sapsucker,” then the human race is doomed and life as we know it will certainly be “for the birds.”

Submitted by Tom Gregory



The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker is approximately 7 inches long. Its back is barred with black and white horizontal stripes. Its most distinguishing feature is a black cap and nape that encircle large white cheek patches.

From the FONR President- Bob Fuller



In anticipation of spring on the Refuge, the Friends of the Noxubee Refuge are also anticipating another great year of service and support to the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. The Friends Board is made up of locals who are passionate about the mission of this outstanding asset of our

community. Thank you for your membership, contributions and support. Please encourage all to come to the Refuge, and come often to see the changes that each season brings.

I was fortunate in January to attend the Moving Friends Forward Workshop at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Besides the 40.5 inches of snow that fell as a part of the famed Snowzilla, I learned a great deal that will hopefully help our organization in its efforts to make the Refuge a better place for all, its native animals and habitat, its dedicated staff, and its many visitors.

One focus of our Friends group will be to inform more people, especially those who are the Refuge's closest neighbors, of the many assets the Refuge has to offer. In the training, it was stated to meet the people where they are. In this effort, we plan to contact the local churches and organizations and ask to make a short presentation on the happenings and resources available at the Refuge. If you would like representatives to visit your group, please contact the Refuge office or any board member of the Friends of the Noxubee Refuge. It is our goal to be more collaborative with our neighbors and make this special place on Earth a bigger part of their lives.

Get out and enjoy the great outdoors at your refuge, the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge!

Bob Fuller
President, Friends of the Noxubee Refuge



Refuge Manager Steve Reagan's Reflections



Why is it important to volunteer? This is a tough question when you have a busy life. Here are my thoughts. It's important to gain knowledge of local resources, give and get a feeling of community, unite people from diverse backgrounds to work toward a common goal, learn new things, realize that every person counts, and maybe even foster a feeling of stewardship for the Refuge.

Volunteering can also provide career experience or offer the chance to try out a new career without making any long-term commitments.

Volunteering at SDH Noxubee NWR is an opportunity to hone and share your personal skills while meeting, working with, and joining in on the professional effort to conserve wildlife for the future generations.

Volunteering is an opportunity to give back to something that provides me and maybe you with much needed personal enjoyment. It is an opportunity to spend time outside knowing our actions can have long term impact on the refuge and its wildlife.

Volunteers are important on several levels. When someone volunteers and they have a positive experience, the person shares the experience and provides others with insight into the refuge thus cultivating future volunteers. Volunteers, who accomplish something or get value out of the task, are very important to the refuge and alleviate some of the work load from regular staff. I also think volunteers may offer up suggestions on improvements in some tasks. Once we've done something a certain way - we are hesitant to change unless prompted. Volunteers can be that prompt. Volunteers also bring diversity to the Refuge as different age groups and a mixture of students participate in projects.

Highly committed volunteers such as resident camper volunteers and the resident student interns are incredible in the amount of work they are able to accomplish. These volunteers are able to take on the big projects too. For those volunteers having more limited time available, they are able to help out on routine and short-term projects.

From the refuge manager perspective, volunteers are a beneficial tool that we can use on the Refuge to accomplish many goals. They are most beneficial when they can commit to multiple visits. Others that participate infrequently can be beneficial, but staffs often are required to invest weekends and training time which reduces the overall benefit potential.

So, what would be your answer?

Steve Reagan

In appreciation of our Members of Friends of Noxubee Refuge, we want to acknowledge your contribution and continued support and say, "Thank you!"

(To become a member, please visit our website: <http://www.friends-of-noxubee-refuge.org/>)



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Noxubee Nature Series
March 3 - 6:30 p.m.
Tisdale Auditorium
Noxubee Visitor Center

Dr. Scott Rush, with MSU's Wildlife Department, will give a presentation entitled "Little Birds, Big Birds, and Things Between."

The quarterly meeting will be in the Tisdale Auditorium of the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting is open to the public, and there is no charge. Light refreshments and a social time will follow the presentation.

Check out the Refuge Facebook Page (Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge) for some great videos and pictures. You are encouraged to share your photos on this page also.



Noxubee Nature Store

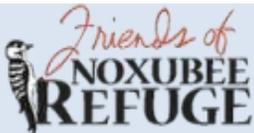
Diana and Duane Lyon, FONR members, made dragonfly jewelry, polished rock magnets and key chains to donate to the store.

Photo by D. Anthony

The Noxubee Nature Store located in the Sam D. Hamilton Visitors Center is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The store is currently being restocked. Many new products will be available including wildlife toys, refuge pins, decals, patches and a new limited edition t-shirt.

In the past the store carried a line of locally made products. If you can make appropriate items for the store, or know of those who can, please call Dalton Anthony 662-213-7985 or e-mail daltonanthony57@yahoo.com.

Submitted by D. Anthony



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