



Tennessee Refuge Reflections

**Tennessee National
Wildlife Refuge**
3006 Dinkins Lane
Paris, TN 38242

(731) 642-2091
<http://TennesseeRefuge.fws.gov>

Refuge Manager
John Taylor

Office Hours
M-F 7:00 to 3:30

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Presidents Page

Is Our Wildlife Endangered?

Some of the comments at the public meeting and in conversations around the area would suggest that building the Headquarters and Visitor Center would mean the end of all the wildlife in the Britton Ford area of the refuge. So is the wildlife endangered by the building? It is a question worthy of an answer and one that has been studied in depth.

The refuge staff has been driving the very roads that lead to the visitor center sites every winter. As they approach concentrations of ducks and geese they become alert and sometimes swim or fly a short distance away, but they do not flee the area. We have many other local examples that back that up. Williams Lake is right in Paris and often hosts ducks and geese, both year round residents and migrant visitors. They are seldom disturbed by cars driving right by the lake. We can also look at recent additions to the list of refuge visitor centers such as Noxubee Refuge in Mississippi. They receive more visitors than are projected for our center and have seen no impact.

For a chance to make your voice heard on the Visitor Center project, email Joan Stevens prior to the public comment period ending July 31st. Her email address is: Joan_Stevens@fws.gov

This week we will have an opportunity to enjoy wildlife up close with the annual wood duck banding for our members at the Duck River Unit. For those of you who have never attended, we certainly hope that you can make the event. For those that are old salts bring your kids, age 5 to 75, and have a good time. Other activities that are on the schedule are Mussels and Aquatics and Astronomy. Both events were very well attended last year. We do hope that we can do one thing different with our evening of astronomy this year; we would like the hurricanes to stay away until after we are finished. Even though the eye was still over Little Rock we got enough clouds last year to take some of the fun out of our star party.

We are getting closer to fall and that means we will once again start our efforts at removing Chinese Privet from the refuge. Privet is the same privet that was used for hedges around old farm houses and it is an invasive species. Because it is evergreen it out competes our native plants and even the deer won't browse it when it is located right next to their trails. Because it is ever green it sticks out as soon as the leaves begin to fall in October and it makes it easy to spot. A walk through some of the areas treated last fall and this spring showed that we had achieved good control.

As always we are open to suggestions for Discovery Series programs and for possible work projects on the refuge that we could fund or provide volunteers for. Let us know your thoughts.

Dan Dziekonski
Friends President



Manager's Corner

Refuge Manager's Corner

“Just the facts, Mam”

Sometimes misinformation and rumors seem to spread faster than the truth! So just like Detective Joe Friday on the old TV series “Dragnet”, let’s just talk about the facts.....the facts about the proposed headquarters/visitor center for the refuge complex.

Some believe the proposed project has been kept a secret for years for fear opposition would kill the project. Fact: The Refuge has requested through various funding avenues a headquarters/visitor center for decades. Most recently, the need for one was included in the refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and the Refuge Friends Group has been mustering support for the project for the last 3-4 years.

Why don't you just stay there in the office you own in Paris and use the money on some wildlife project? Fact: The Refuge doesn’t own the office we occupy now and never has owned a refuge office in its 64 year old history. The Recovery Act money was earmarked by the Department of the Interior to be used on a refuge headquarters/visitor center. If it is not used on Tennessee Refuge it will go to another state to fund a refuge headquarters/visitor center.

The staff at Cross Creeks Refuge will be reassigned to the new facility and the office/visitor center at Cross Creeks will be closed. Fact: The facilities at Cross Creeks will continue to remain open as they historically have. Cross Creeks and Fort Campbell staff will be administered from the new facility, as they currently are now from the Paris office, but none of the staff will report for duty at the new headquarters/visitor center.

The roads on Britton Ford Peninsula and Swain Point will be opened throughout the year. Fact: Swain Point Road will continue to be closed during the waterfowl wintering period.....November 15 through March 15. Only the section of the Britton Ford Peninsula road which leads to the proposed headquarters site will be open throughout the year. The Britton Ford Peninsula road past the site will be closed as it always has to maintain a waterfowl sanctuary.

The building will disturb the peninsula's wildlife and chase the waterfowl out of the area. Fact: The refuge management staff has over 75 years experience managing wildlife on over 25 national wildlife refuges and state wildlife management areas. We feel confident any disturbance to wildlife will be minimal. From what we have experienced on the Britton Ford area and at other refuges, any waterfowl disturbed by traffic going to the facility will just swim away from the shoreline or flush a short distance out in the water. The sanctuary is over 1,300 acres closed to all boat traffic from November 15 to March 15, and we expect any birds disturbed will simply temporarily relocate to another area of the sanctuary.

Why can't you just build it somewhere else? Fact: Because of the tight timeframe of the Recovery Act money and the intense scrutiny by the Department of the Interior, if the building is not built on one of our proposed sites on Britton Ford, the funding will go to a refuge in another state. We just wouldn't have time to get another site approved and into the loop in time.

So be like Sergeant Friday, learn the facts. Most can be found in our Environmental Assessment of the project, which is online at our website, at the Rhea Library, or available in our Paris Office. And after you do, send or email me at john_taylor@fws.gov your comments and/or concerns about the proposal. Hurry.....the public comment period ends July 31.

BIRDER'S CORNER

By Richard Graves



Bird Watchers represent the largest segment of the Wildlife watching public that regularly visit the National Wildlife Refuges. Birders spend almost 2 billion dollars a year on equipment, travel and refuge visits. It is important to make refuges birder friendly to attract birds that can be viewed by our visitors as well as keeping our birds happy and healthy. I learned at the Washington D.C. conference that the Friends Groups should have at least one Birder on the board. Since I am a board member, and coincidentally, a Bird Watcher, I feel inspired to come forth and write this column.

Our local Refuge was established in 1945 for the purpose of providing a supportive foundation for Migratory Birds. Our refuge belongs to the National Refuge System representing a diverse sampling of our country's natural ecological communities.

People also have an important place in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Millions of Americans and visitors from around the world find recreational opportunities on refuge lands. Many refuges have visitor facilities, such as visitor centers, boat ramps, trails, and wildlife drives. Some refuges have established special sites for wildlife observation.

Each refuge, including ours, is founded on its importance to wildlife, and the public uses are therefore compatible with the wildlife mission to conserve wildlife. Our refuge was created to form a strong foundation in supporting migratory birds. Many refuges, similar to ours, are scattered along the traditional flyways. These refuges provide critical habitat for waterfowl and songbirds to breed, rest, and feed along their seasonal migration routes.

In addition, refuges are responsible for maintaining the natural landscape for wildlife. Refuges are correcting past environmental abuses and restoring native habitats into productive places for wildlife and people.

I started bird watching when my Grandmother gave me binoculars and a bird book at the age of 10, and I am still active in bird watching. It is important in bird watching to document your sightings, especially a personal first sighting. Birders call the document their "Life List." It is important to start your Life List as soon as possible in order to keep an up to date life time document of all the bird species you have seen. A simple approach is to make a note in your field bird book. The note would include date and location as a minimum. Then when time permits, transfer your sightings from the field book to a list, which accumulates your total sightings over your life time. There are over 900 bird species in North America. I have over 300 on my Life List. Other Birders in our Friends Group have Life Lists as well. Joyce North has over 700 species on her list, and Madge Lawrence is past 400. Another birding document that is great is the Refuge Bird List. Most refuges have their own bird lists that are available at the refuge office. Our refuge has a bird list. The refuge bird list is a good document to indicate what birds may be present, including levels of commonality by season.

Even more fun in documenting your sighting is taking a picture of the bird. Stay tuned - Birding with a camera is my favorite way to go birding and will be covered in future articles.

Bird Watching is educational fun, great outdoor fun for anybody of any age. All you need is binoculars and a bird book. Be observant and start now. The picture on this report is a Common Yellowthroat taken from the Childs Observation Deck.

Critter Corner

Indigo Bunting



Male Indigo Bunting



Female Indigo Bunting

Quick Facts

Female: Dark brown with light brown under parts

Male: Deep blue with black wing and tail edges

Wingspan: 8-9"

Length: 4.5 inches

No. Eggs: 2-6

Number of Broods: 2

Typical diet: Insects, weed and grass seeds

The Indigo Bunting is a small migratory bird that ranges from the Gulf Coast to Southern Canada during the breeding season and from Southern Florida to Northern South America during the winter months. The first arrivals to Tennessee occur during late April to early May. During migration the birds often fly at night using the stars for navigation.

The Indigo Bunting is approximately 4.5" in length. An interesting fact about the male birds color is that the feathers have no blue pigment. The feathers are black and it is the diffraction of light passing through the feathers that makes them appear brilliant blue during the mating season. The female is a dark brown with lighter brown under parts and indistinct black bars on the wings and tail all year round and the male's winter plumage is a similar brown to the females. Both male and female have a small conical bill.

The birds live in low brush and in the successional areas between grass lands and forests. They are often found along rights of way for highways, power lines and rail roads. The bright blue males can often be seen flying along the sides of the roads. Their nests are often located one to three feet off the ground but may be as high as 8-9'. The nest is an open cup shape and is made from leaves and coarse grasses.

After mating the females lay from 2 to 6 eggs. Their incubation period is from 12 to 13 days and the birds fledge in about nine to ten days. The young are feed mostly insects to provide protein. Buntings will raise two broods in most years.

The adult bird's diet is composed of insects, such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, spiders and beetles with lesser quantities of weed and grass seeds and some small fruits. They are beneficial to farmers in that they help to keep insects and weeds under control. The birds don't usually drink, obtaining most of their water from their food.

Keep your eyes open as you drive down country roads or around the refuge and you are very likely to see and Indigo Bunting flitting from bush to bush along the side of the road ahead of you.

Thanks to our Newest Member!!.....Terry L. Evans

DID YOU KNOW THE REFUGE

Has three Hiking Trails?

- Britton Ford Hiking Trail – 2.5 miles
- Chickasaw National Recreation Trail – 1.1 miles
- Duck River Bottoms Overlook Trail – ¼ mile

And four Observation Decks?

- V.L. Childs
- Bennett's Creek
- Pintail Point
- Duck River Bottoms Overlook

Visit our website at: www.tnwrfriends.org

Our Mission

Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. is an independent, non-profit corporation dedicated to supporting the primary purposes for which the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge was established and promoting the preservation of the natural and historical resources of the Refuge, foster its use and enjoyment by the public consistent with the protection and preservation of its environment, and engage in such educational, scientific and civic activities as will assist the management of the Refuge in carrying out its mandates.

Membership Annual Dues

\$15 Individual
\$25 Family
\$100 Corporate
\$500 Benefactor

Mail to:

Friends of
Tennessee NWR
3006 Dinkins Lane
Paris, TN 38242

Upcoming Events

Sat., August 8th Mussels & Aquatics with Biologist Don Hubbs-
9:00 am at Duck River Bottoms. Meet in the parking lot at corner of Long St. and Hwy 70 in New Johnsonville. Don Hubbs does a wonderful job tying together how mussels, fisheries and water quality are all tied together. Come prepared to get wet either with a bathing suit or old shorts and an old t-shirt. You will also need old tennis shoes or swim shoes. However, if you prefer to stay dry on land, you will still have a great time.

Sat., Sept. 12th Mystery Geocaching - We are still looking for someone to facilitate this, stay tuned.

Sat., Oct. 17th Astronomy and Star Gazing - 6:00 pm at Swain Point in the Britton Ford/Sulphur Wells area. LBL planetarium manager Don Partain will be coming again to lead us on a night of star gazing on the refuge. This time of year is perfect to look to the night sky with no moon. We hope for a relaxing and educational evening.



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