



# 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

## Benefactors

Johnny Allen

Peppers Toyota

Collins Land Clearing

Paris! Magazine

## Corporate Sponsors

RE/MAX Cornerstone  
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## Presidents Page

### Fall Splendor?

We have had some great fall days and I hope you have been able to get out and enjoy them. Fall is our reward for having tolerated the heat and humidity of our long hot summers. While September and October are historically dry months, we have had a great deal of rain and overcast this year. That has led to an abundance of moss, lichens and fungus in the woods. So, if you get a chance to hike any of the trails, be sure to keep your eyes open and focused low for some interesting mosses, toad stools and mushrooms. We have had a bumper crop of each. Often we miss these jewels because we are focused in the treetops or looking far down the trail.

Fall is the time of year when everyone gets busy. We have the orange of UT football, Halloween and people take trips to see some of the great fall foliage. Be sure that you make some time for yourself among all of the rush to get out to the refuge and see some of the great scenery we have right here in our own backyard. The area is full of migrating songbirds now, and if you pay attention to your flowers you will probably see a great many monarch butterflies heading south as well. The earliest of our ducks are on the lake and the geese will soon follow in large numbers. It is a great time of year.

The Friends have been busy as well. I hope that each of you have been able to see the work of our local artists and photographers on display at Lee School. Special thanks to Drs. Danny Kimberlin and Gene Gulish for the sponsorship that makes this art and photography show possible. It's never too early to start thinking about next year's show. As you head out to the refuge be sure to take along your camera because you might just snap next year's winning photo. You've lived it before, the greatest things happen when you have left the camera behind.

Bring the kids to the Court Square in Paris for spiders and other spooky Halloween items as part of Spooktacular. Then in November we will be back at the Old 23<sup>rd</sup>. Join us for a "pot luck" lunch with the meat and lemonade provided by the Friend's Group. Just bring your favorite covered dish. It will be a day of history, with local writers and science, with great classes on bats and critters of the night all coupled with a chance to hike the trails, take a hay ride and meet friends from around the area. Last year we had over 350 attend and we certainly hope that this year you can come on out and join us.

If that isn't enough for you, we've got some fall projects like controlling Chinese Privet and other invasives on the refuge as part of our habitat improvement programs. We'll try to keep a variety of things to do on our schedule and hope that there is always one to your liking in the near future.

Dan Dziekonski  
Friends President

# Manager's Corner

By David Zabriskie

Hello Refuge Friends,

The dog days of summer have ended and now the great fall weather is upon us. This summer sure produced some abnormal weather. We had a nice cool snap in the middle of summer, which was nice, but an overabundance of rain made for soggy work.

The cooperative farmers had to keep an eye to the sky all summer as spring flooding caused wide-spread drown-out of crops and some areas required replanting. The summer saw more rain with farmers dodging showers to maintain the agricultural fields. As we speak, the field conditions need to dry before harvest can begin.

All is not lost with the excessive rainfall this summer. The moist-soil units on the refuge have thrived and may produce some of the best yields in decades. "Moist-soil" is the art of manipulating water levels or soil moisture to promote certain plants germination and growth. These units produce valuable seeds and invertebrates that amount to a waterfowl buffet. Clayton and Robert (refuge biologists) are some of the best in the region with this type of management.

The spring flooding caused a good bit of damage to the roads and levees of the Duck River unit. The maintenance staff (David, Mike, Mike, and Dan) worked hard to repair the levees and spillways back to pre-flood conditions. They also spent several weeks down on the Busseltown unit fixing roads and installing culverts. That unit has received a lot of attention this summer and looks great. Please have a look for yourself it is a beautiful unit. We didn't forget the Big Sandy unit. That unit saw a wind storm drop large trees on the Chickasaw trail. The maintenance crew cleaned the trail of the downed trees and made the trail passable again.

Visitors will be happy to see the auto tour route is now open on the Duck River unit till November 15th. The maintenance staff constructed several pull-outs for vehicles along the loop to see wildlife and wildlife management at work. There will be informative signs installed soon so come check it out. The Pintail Point observation building has been moved to Haul road and looks great. I am sure this will be a great spot to see waterfowl this winter.

There is always something going on to maintain or improve the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge for the critters and for our visitors. Come by and see us.

Dave Zabriskie  
Assistant Refuge Manager

# BIRDER'S CORNER

## By Richard Graves



Birders Corner by Richard Graves

We are now entering a period of environmental change which happens every year; we call the change “fall”. The leaves change, it becomes much cooler and daylight periods get shorter each day. Along with the arrival of fall, comes another important arrival...migratory birds. It is a very important time for our refuge whose purpose is to provide a habitat for migratory birds. Fall is a great time to go birding at our refuge. The creation and maintenance of our refuge, to facilitate and protect birds during their migration, is an important human effort.

I would like to cover some other ways humans are helping bird migration. Most of us have at least one Hummingbird feeder in the yard. In August and September, feeding activity really picks up. The sugar and water mixture in your feeder provides the carbohydrates in their diets to help build the fat deposits they need as stored energy to complete a migration trip to Central America. Many of the Hummingbirds coming to the feeder are migrating through. Seventy-five to eighty percent will not survive the round trip to Central America and back. The survivors will likely return to their original nesting locations. The energy deposits that they build for their trip is an amazing use of energy. Slightly heavier than a Nickel, the final portion of their trip may be up to 400 miles, crossing a portion of the Gulf of Mexico.

Another very important human intervention to help bird migration is very unique: The lowering of our lake level to winter pool. This process started occurring in the 1940's for many important reasons, including being a part of our National flood control system. Lowering the lake level exposes shore line and large areas of mudflats. The exposure of our Shoreline/mudflats provides the needed food source for the declining shorebird population. Sandpipers, Dunlins, Plovers, Yellowlegs and Willets are examples of the Shorebird species. At the present lake lowering schedule, initial mudflat exposure begins in mid August. The majority of shorebirds are here in September on their way to their winter home. More than 20 species have been recorded in a recent study. Pace Point, in our refuge, is a nationally known hotspot for viewing shorebirds. ( ref.: [www.Ebird.org](http://www.Ebird.org).)

My favorite example of humans helping with migration and trying very hard to bring back an endangered species is the raising and then training of Whooping Cranes to migrate using ultra light aircraft. This is a very exciting concept that I have personally witnessed as a member of Operation Migration. The new migration route is coincidentally nearby. Carroll County was a planned stop last year, but because the flying conditions were so good, it was decided to go to the next planned stop near Savannah, TN. Four ultra light aircraft were used; one as a designated lead craft that picks up the Cranes each morning by landing near their cage then quickly taking off, hopefully with birds forming up in a “V” formation off the ultra light wing. The other ultra light aircraft are used to pick up the strays, like a cattle round up in the sky. The birds are trained at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and end up at refuges in Florida to re-establish an Eastern migration route. The Cranes will hopefully return the following year via the learned route. As the route near here becomes more populated, we will likely see a Whooper in our refuge. That will really be something to see!

Pictured above is the class of 08' in formation at 3000' over the Tennessee River. Maybe one of these, or a relative, will stop for a visit.

# Critter Corner

## Wild Turkey



Toms in full display



Hen Feeding



Wild Turkey

### Quick Facts

**Female:** Dark brown

**Male:** Dark with blue face and bright red neck wattles

**Wingspan:** 50-56"

**Length:** 45 inches

**Weight:** 5-18 pounds

**No. Eggs:** 4-16

**Typical diet:** Insects, snails and slugs weed and grass seeds and acorns

The Wild Turkey is a recent success story. It had become very rare in most parts of the country due to over hunting by the late 1800s. It was trapped and reintroduced, starting in the 40's, with strict hunting seasons and limits. The result is that today it can be found in abundance almost everywhere. It was so respected in Colonial Times that people such as Benjamin Franklin promoted it over the Bald Eagle as the National Bird.

The wild turkey is a far cry from its pen raised cousins. They have been bred for production of white meat and can no longer fly and can barely walk. The wild turkey is a very fast runner and, even though it prefers not to fly, it can fly great distances. When startled they usually run or fly low to the ground for 100 yards or so to remove themselves from danger. If needed, they can fly over the treetops for longer periods to get away from the threat.

The turkey is a large, dark, ground dwelling bird. It has a short bill with a bare head and neck and a large fan shaped tail. The females are mottled brown and black but the males stand out during their mating display. They have a white forehead, bright blue face and their neck wattles are scarlet. The males also have a long beard. At night, turkey roost in pine or oak trees for safety.

The female turkey lays 4 to 16 light brown eggs with black spots that hatch after about a month. The male provides no care and the hen is vulnerable to predators when she is sitting on the nest. The young chicks follow the female and she feeds them for a few days but they soon are eating on their own. Turkeys are omnivores eating just about anything. They eat insects, weed and grass seeds, snails and slugs, small snakes, berries, acorns and hickory and beach nuts. If a flock of turkeys has been eating in an area, it will look as if it had been vacuumed. The females and their broods may join into larger groups with 30 birds in a flock being very common.

Our Wild Turkeys are a great conservation success story. Keep your eyes open as you drive around the refuge and country roads. You will often see large flocks feeding near the tree lines. For hunters, birders and wildlife enthusiasts a flock of wild turkeys is a welcome site. We are certainly glad to see their numbers growing.

## Thanks to our Newest Members!

**Trey Smith**  
**Jack Davis**  
**Jack Davis, Jr.**  
**Sue Bradley**  
**Jim and Lupe Baker**  
**Chuck & Linda Haag**

**Jon B. Hall**  
**Chad Fisher**  
**Jonathan Flood**  
**Scott Greer**  
**Sue Corbin**  
**Tucker & Debra Daniel**

**“Wild for Wildlife” Art Show Reception  
September 25 2009 Lee School**



An evening of fine art and beautiful music!

Viewing the artist's bird house creations.



A Blue Ribbon carving by Joe Casey



Richard Graves  
First place photo

Winning art by  
Chris Hall



1<sup>st</sup> Place for  
Glenn Earl  
Newman



## Spotlight on the Staff

### David Zabriskie



This month we highlight David Zabriskie, Supervisory Wildlife Refuge Specialist on the Duck River unit. David is responsible for managing the maintenance crew and all the maintenance projects and facilities on the Duck River unit. In addition, he oversees the cooperative farming program on the Duck River and Busseltown units. His duties include organizing and facilitating road projects, levee repairs, and water control structure installations, as well as capital improvements to refuge facilities.

David received his bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, with a minor in zoology and forestry in 2003. He was then accepted into the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as a SCEP (Student Career Experience Program). As part of that program he continued his education at Clemson University receiving his Masters degree in Forest Resources in 2005, while working at Wheeler NWR during summer breaks. David is a veteran of the U.S. Navy and served from 1993 thru 1997 as an aviation electronics technician on F/A-18's.

David started his career with the USFWS in 2003 as a SCEP at Wheeler NWR and upon completion of his Masters degree was sent to Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR as a biologist. In 2006, he went to Hawaii to work as a refuge manager on a remote atoll at the Hawaiian Islands NWR. He just returned to the Southeast landing at Tennessee NWR in July 2009.

Check out the new Friends Website at:  
[www.tnfriends.org](http://www.tnfriends.org)

Friends of Tennessee  
National Wildlife Refuge  
3006 Dinkins Lane  
Paris, TN 38242



**Friends Of Tennessee  
National Wildlife Refuge  
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## Upcoming Events

**Sat., Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> “Back to the Old 23<sup>rd</sup>”**

12 -5:30 PM at Mt. Zion Church on Big Sandy Peninsula featuring a “Pot Luck” dinner with meat and drinks provided. Join us for an interesting day of history and nature. Meet Larry Perry, author of “A Pictorial History of the Old 23<sup>rd</sup>”, learn about bats, owls, spiders and snakes, and enjoy a hayrack ride through the 23<sup>rd</sup>!

**Tues., Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> Exploring Nature**

6:30 pm at the Refuge Office. Presented by the LBL Nature Center Staff. It will be a hands-on evening with snakes, turtle and other fuzzy little critters from West TN. Come to see what is living just beyond your backyard!