



# 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

What a pleasure it is to work with a group that is as enthusiastic about our Refuge as this. This spring we have seen some major milestones reached and it seems as though we have rolled directly from one event to another.

I want to say thank you to Jim Lacey for his efforts and time in constructing our web site. I owe him a great deal of information to complete the site but we are now operating and we will try to keep the site fresh with items of interest and current events posted for your information. Go ahead and take a test drive at <http://www.tnwrfriends.org/>

The Friends were joined on Earth Day by members the Henry County 4H Club a number volunteers to conduct a roadside and shoreline trash pick up in the Britton Ford area. Small things like assisting in a clean up make a very large difference. With funds to operate the refuge becoming more and more scarce this is an example of some of the little things that can be done locally to insure that dollars are available for the most pressing of needs.

But for those of you attended or read about it in the papers you know that the highlight of our spring events had to be the dedication of the Britton Ford Hiking Trail and celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. I would like to extend a special thank you to US Congressman John Tanner and Tennessee Senator Roy Herron for taking the time out of their busy schedule to speak at our event. We expect our elected officials to be present in the Capital for every vote, while at the same time we invite them to more special events than you can imagine. We are so glad that you could fit us in and thank you again for your motivational words.

All of the Friends, Refuge Staff and volunteers that came out to the trail dedication deserve a special pat on the back. Everybody did an outstanding job and we received nothing but glowing comments on the event from those in attendance. Our hats are off to Joan Stevens, our Refuge Office Liaison who worked tirelessly, from the first hint of a path in the woods right up to the ribbon cutting to make this trail and this day happen. It was an opportunity for everyone to have some fun and learn a little about the birds, bugs, plants and critters that call the refuge home. We will do our best to continue to improve our refuge and to keep events like this in our schedule.

As always we welcome your input. Please feel free to offer suggestions for projects and activities we can conduct as a group to educate and inform. Please continue to inform others about this wonderful treasure we have in our back yard and the work we are doing to make it a sanctuary for both wildlife and people as well. Thanks again for all of your support.

Dan Dziekonski  
Friends President



# Manager's Corner

## "Rough Waters Ahead"

Deputy Manager Raye Nilius and I just returned a couple of weeks ago from a meeting of all the Refuge managers in the Southeastern Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service. I would like to tell you the tone of the meeting was encouraging and uplifting, but unfortunately that was not the case at all. I thought it only right to share the truth with my Friends.

The main focus of the meeting was discussion of the declining budgets in the Refuge System and how we will deal with the crisis. If we are lucky, the Fiscal Year 2007 budget will stay flat for the Service, but an expected 3% reduction is proposed for Fiscal Year 2008. As our new Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Dale Hall, recently put it:

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is at a crossroads. To continue the agency’s proud tradition of national conservation leadership, we must act decisively and with a clear vision for the future. In the short term, we must prepare for tighter budgets. In the long term, we must position ourselves to maintain strong core functions essential to accomplishing our mission.”

How have we got to this point? Well, shifting national priorities such as funding military operations overseas, homeland security, and hurricane relief have resulted in declining federal discretionary funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other Department of the Interior agencies. With the expectation that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future, the Service must implement organizational changes to manage the National Wildlife Refuge System and its other programs effectively and responsibly within these constraints.

Even if funding remains level each fiscal year, increased inflationary costs will continue to erode base budgets (a relatively fixed and predictable annual allocation) for Refuge programs. For example, as more and more of National Wildlife Refuges’ base budgets are devoted to paying permanent staff, most stations will be operating “in the red” within a few years if corrective action isn’t taken.

To keep base budgets “in the black” will require a shift away from permanent salaries toward increasing the funding available for natural resource management and public use programs at each Refuge. It has been suggested that a budget ratio of 75 percent salaries to 25 percent management capability will best meet current planning objectives. The plan to get to this budget division will require the elimination of permanent positions, and the reassignment of other positions to other Refuges.

A number of National Wildlife Refuges across the nation will “stay strong.” Some will get smaller, and some will be closed. The decision to focus resources on certain stations will prevent the across-the-board mediocrity that would surely result from unilateral budget cuts. In anticipation of budget shortfalls, many regions in the last few years have been complexing Refuges by combining a number of stations under one management office. Plans are also being formulated to reduce each of our 8 regional offices and our Washington office by 10%, and to offer early retirement options to some employees.

What does this mean for Tennessee Refuge? Well, I don’t really know for sure. I do know that our salaries make up about 90% of our base funding, and that we have not and will not be filling many vacant positions in the future. We have already had to curtail several activities on the refuge such as law enforcement, hunt check stations, songbird monitoring and banding, and some public use activities. I don’t expect Tennessee or Cross Creeks Refuges to be closed, but I certainly can imagine some severely reduced management programs on the stations if funding remains constant.

These are certainly times when one needs a Friend, and you all know there are none better than the Friends of Tennessee Refuge. With your help and support, I’m confident we will stay the course through the rough waters ahead. For more information about these and other refuge issues see the National Wildlife Refuge Association's website at [www.refugenet.org](http://www.refugenet.org) and click on Refuge Issues.

John Taylor, Refuge Manager

# Critter Corner

## The Refuge Itself



**White tailed deer stands by a stream in forested habitat.**



**Biologist Clayton Ferrell in moist soil field.**



**Mudflats, important habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl and more.**

The Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is the "critter" that we'll talk about in this newsletter. The idea to highlight the refuge as the critter raised more than a few questions. The refuge, however, provides the essential habitat: the food, water and shelter that our resident and migratory wildlife depend on. The refuge stretches for over 65 miles along the Tennessee River and is a broad mix of open water, woodlands, early successional (brush), moist soils (wetlands) and agricultural land. It provides a diversity of habitat for all types of wildlife.

Looking at the refuge you will see that shore and tree lines are sculpted and irregular. These curving shorelines and forest margins are significant because at these margins, where you change from water to soil, grass to brush and brush to trees that most wildlife thrives. These curving lines greatly increase the area where wildlife will be found. Pockets of trees within open fields and brushy stream banks provide additional shelter.

The saying is that variety is the spice of life and variety is found throughout the refuge. Walking through the diverse habitat provided within the refuge you see many varieties of plant, insect and animal life. To enhance this diversity in the forest habitat a forest management plan is ongoing which includes selective thinning of forested areas to create clearings in the closed woods canopy. These clearings will allow for regeneration on the forest floor and new growth that further expands the valuable habitat, especially for nesting migratory songbirds.

### Quick Facts

Three Units: **Duck River**  
**Big Sandy**  
**Busseltown**

26,447 acres open water  
19,984 acres wooded  
528 acres early successional  
3,159 acres agriculture  
1028 acres moist soil



**The refuge's series of creeks, bays, islands, peninsulas and shoreline provide for a diverse number of wildlife species.**

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### Thanks to our New Members!!

Benefactor: Paris! Magazine

Congressman John Tanner  
Jim and Mary Lacey  
Fran and Russ Fathauer  
Jerry and Sue Watkins  
Denton and Shannon Jordan  
Barron and Wendy Crawford  
Rick and Mary Jane King

State Rep. Roy Herron  
Jauiece and John Stahl  
Ski Witzofsky  
Gayle Mitchell  
James and Laura Dougherty  
Bill Davis  
Michelle and Craig Atkins

Jean and Mark Ruble  
Millard and Gay Nichols  
Lisa and Ted Cason  
Beverly Heinze-Lacey  
Connie McSwain  
Jan Wood

## 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:

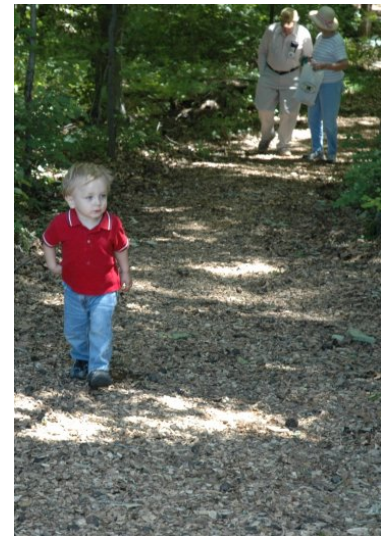
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Paris, TN 38242

## Britton Ford Trail Dedication & Celebration of International Migratory Bird Day

On Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> we celebrated IMBD and the dedication of the Britton Ford Hiking Trail. The trail and the dedication ceremony were both the result of hard work and dedication on the part of Ranger Joan Stevens and a group of concerned volunteers. Approximately 200 people attended and were treated with a hotdog lunch while participating in the many activities. Guests were treated to guided birding and trail tours throughout the event. Mounted waterfowl, insects, animal tracks, a sample mist net, tree identification, a migration game, face painting and hawks and owls from Paris Landing were just some of the displays. The day saw many bird houses built and a blue bird showed us all that if you build it they will come; she moved into a demonstration box in less than 24 hours. The new 2.5 mile trail is fully interpreted with an outdoor classroom at the trailhead. It is open daily from March 16<sup>th</sup> through November 14<sup>th</sup>.



Cutting the ribbon for the trail are Dan Dziekonski of Paris, president of the Friends of the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Senator Roy Herron, U.S. Congressman John Tanner, and John Taylor, refuge manager.



Hikers of all ages enjoyed a walk on the trail.



David Beasley constructs a birdhouse with the help of member Bill Williams. Below Congressman John Tanner speaks at the dedication ceremony.



Member Joe Snow explains the names of waterfowl that visit the refuge.



## Friends Members and Volunteers Clean Up the Refuge

On April 22 we celebrated Earth Day with a shoreline and road side trash pick up. Friends Group Members were joined by the Henry County 4H Club and local volunteers to clean up over five miles of roadside and several miles of shoreline in the Britton Ford area of the Big Sandy Unit. Special attention was paid to the area around the Swain Point boat ramp and the VL Childs Overlook. In all we collected a trailer full of trash from the area and all of the volunteers had a great time doing it.

We need to encourage people to take good care of our refuge. Litter and trash can be dangerous to the wildlife and in general looks terrible. With funds for refuge operations as limited as they are today picking up trash and repairing vandalism is often hard for refuge staff to conduct. Thanks to all those volunteers that care enough to make the refuge a better place!

### What's next?

There will be a wood duck banding opportunity in July or August at the Duck River Bottoms. The cooperation of the ducks is required for this event so no firm date has been set. Look for a special flyer announcing this special "members only" event.



### Spotlight on the Staff



We start this feature with Raye Nilius, Deputy Refuge Manager, who started her work with the Fish & Wildlife Service in 1998 at the Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office where she served as the Farm Bill Coordinator and the Ozark Highlands Specialist. In 1999 she created a multi-disciplinary team of citizens and agencies to spearhead cave restoration projects for endangered cave species in the Ozark Plateau Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Her work in caves of the Ozark Plateau formed the basis of the Arkansas E.S. Office's endangered species listing and recovery program, and linked the Service's efforts with those of the State agencies, The Nature Conservancy, scientists, and private landowners.

In 2001 Raye joined the Service's Washington Office in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. She served as the Farm Bill liaison, working with USDA and others to help develop legislation for the 2002 Farm Bill. In 2002 Raye transferred to the Headquarters Office's Wildlife Resources Branch as liaison between the Refuge System's National Office and the Service's Headquarters Divisions of Migratory Birds and Endangered Species. She soon developed a partnership with the Service's Division of International Conservation that launched the Refuge System's HQ Office into international initiatives for migratory species with the Department of State, the Mexican and Canadian Government, China, and South America.

Raye returned to the field as Deputy Refuge Manager for Mississippi's Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex in 2003. She spent nearly 2 years in Mississippi before accepting the Deputy Refuge Manager position at Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge in August of 2005. As Deputy Manager, Raye "keeps the trains running on time." She supervises the Cross Creeks Refuge Manager and Tennessee Refuge's Duck River Unit Assistant Manager, in addition to Tennessee Refuge's biologist, outreach coordinator, three law enforcement officers, and two administrative support staff. She and her husband Dan have been married for 29 years and have three grown children.