



Blowin' in the Wind

Volume 6, Issue 1

Winter, 2011

President's Message

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The last edition was in late March prior to the Annual Membership Meeting which occurred on April 17th, 2010. At that meeting the Board of Directors was chosen and at the subsequent regular meeting officers were chosen. The current Board is Terry Beals, President; Sue Robins, Vice President; Ken Meyers, Treasurer; Mary Jane Nelson, Secretary and members Fred Poe, John Carter, Chris Phillips [representing the Chickasaws], Noble Jobe, and Larry Hancock, our News letter editor.

I am honored to have been trusted with the presidency. I will do my best, working with the Board and membership, to keep TREES [Tishomingo Refuge Ecology and Education Society] moving forward as a "Friends Group" to assist our Refuge and Fish Hatchery managers and staff.

If, however, we are to make any significant difference we must have participation and volunteering from, not only the Board, but from all the membership. So...I will serve as volunteer coordinator, with Mary Jane Nelson, for a time and will have, as my goal, to call on every TREES member to get acquainted, learn your interests, and solicit 4 volunteer days a year. To be successful I realize that we must find ways to accomplish some tasks while having "fun" and enjoying camaraderie together on nice, and some, not so nice, days.

I am writing this as I man the Welcome Center/Washita Farm Heritage Museum on a simply beautiful Saturday in late October. This facility is likely the most significant accomplishment of TREES. It has been open over a year now, being officially dedicated on October 2nd, 2009. We have been blessed during our first year to have the "Center" staffed from 9:00AM to 3:00PM, Monday thru Saturday, by an entity under the Department of Labor, known as "Experience Works"! However, we are currently without any staffing from that entity and need volunteers to keep the facility open until such time as "Experience Works" staffing becomes available, once again. Please contact me at 580-371-3635 or Mary Jane at 580-443-5788 if you can and would enjoy a peaceful day or days on the Refuge.

It seems to me that we should acknowledge and express a sincere "thanks" to previous Board Members that brought this group into being. Those would be our Founder, Earl Brewer, along with Doug Wood, Tim Patton, Derek Collins, Matthew Mericle, me and John Bruno, recently deceased. Others that have served on the Board are Stephen Greetham [Chickasaws], Letha Clark, and Gary Lawley.

Until next time...Terry

Refuge Managers Update

New Refuge Vision Completed

Tishomingo NWR recently completed a fifteen year Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) that will be released around the first of 2011. This CCP received direct input from numerous partners from across the State of Oklahoma and the general public. The combining of this public input into the Plan has developed a solid foundation for the betterment of both flora and fauna on Tishomingo NWR. The plan sets management direction and goals that coupled with adequate funding will propel the refuge into a premier wildlife habitat.

The first tangible goal of this plan is already underway with a partnership including the Chickasaw Nation, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and the Fish & Wildlife Service to restore the 225 acre Big Bottom Wetland into a manageable wetland unit. The refuge has struggled for years in attempting to manage the unit based on received rainfall but with the guidance of NRCS Engineers the unit can be flooded and drained as needed to support optimum conditions for both emergent native vegetation and planted crops for waterfowl. The completion of this project will not only assist waterfowl hunters but bird watchers in general which is a win - win situation not only for the refuge but the local community.

TREES has also recently joined this partnership by agreeing to provide 322 hours of labor towards the project. TREES volunteer Mike Tate, a Fish and Wildlife Service certified equipment operator, will be providing the TREES portion of labor. The additional help from TREES has allowed the refuge to purchase \$5700 in diesel fuel to build dikes for water manipulation. This project will not only help waterfowl but thousands of shorebirds as they migrate each year.

Kris Patton
Refuge Manager



The photo is taken in the Big Bottom Unit and is the installation of the new drainage structure to allow for the manipulation of water. Lots more work will occur in 2011!

TREES gets \$3000 Donation



TREES received an early Christmas present due to the generosity of a retail outfitter and a national manufacturer of clothing and equipment for those that enjoy spending time in the great out of doors! The Backwoods Store in north Oklahoma City teamed up with Patagonia to make a donation of \$3000.00 to a group focused on informing and educating the public, but especially youngsters, about the importance of conservation and stewardship of our environment, wildlife and the maintenance of our great out of doors as an uncluttered and pristine place. Due to TREES Treasurer, Ken Meyers, making the donors aware of TREES and our mission in south central Oklahoma we were selected to receive this award. Tom Adams, on the left, General Manager of Backwoods is shown presenting the check to Ken Meyers center and Terry Beals, President of TREES.

Bald Eagle with radio transmitter stops at Refuge

You might be interested to know that one of the 3 Bald Eagles that were reared in a nest in Sand Springs, OK seems to have visited Tishomingo in October

The Sutton Center put satellite-radio transmitters on a male and female nestling Bald Eagle at a Sands Springs nest on May 27th, and are posting their movements online for interested people to follow. The link to their website that shows that information is: http://suttoncenter.org/pages/eagle_tracking.

Click on the rectangle that is marked "male eagle" and you can see that from October 6th-10th he was at Tishomingo. You can also click on the red numbered rectangles and get more data such as the time, date and lati-long of the location. If you click on the "hybrid" rectangle it will overlay a Google Map aerial photo.



Hatchery Report

Oklahoma National Guardsmen Trained in Hatchery Operations

The 2 – 45th Agribusiness Development Team of the Oklahoma National Guard is presently deployed in Afghanistan with the mission of re-building the country's only national fish hatchery. Prior to deployment the Team spent the day at the Tishomingo Hatchery to learn everything they could about hatchery operations. The guardsmen ultimately plan to train the Afghan people to operate their country's hatchery for food fish production. Tishomingo Hatchery staff have committed to continue assisting the Team through whatever means of communication is available.

Oklahoma National Guard 2-45 Agribusiness Development Team.



Loading catfish for delivery to Arizona.



Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery's Fish Stocked Outside State Boundaries

Several species of fish raised at the Tishomingo Hatchery are ultimately released in waters of other states. Paddlefish are transported to Kansas for release in John Redmond Reservoir to counter heavy fishing pressure. Alligator gar are sent to Missouri to help control the rapidly expanding populations of introduced Asian carp which are harmful to native fish populations, sport fishing, and boating. Also, this year channel catfish were sent to Native American Reservations in Arizona and New Mexico when another federal fish hatchery was unable to meet these commitments. Of course, we take care of Oklahoma waters first with paddlefish stocked in Lake Eufaula and Grand Lake, and catfish stocked on National Wildlife Refuge waters and other waters in the state.

Learning Experiences for Area Youth

Biologists at the Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery conducted several *Biologist in Training* and Fish Identification courses for area youth, where youngsters get to learn to do some of the things Fish Biologists do. Besides seining and netting fish the youth learned to identify what they caught and how things work in an aquatic ecosystem. Additional courses are planned for spring and summer of 2011.



Future biologists in training.

Donation to Hatchery

The Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery recently received a generous offer from the Delta Foundation to purchase heat pumps for the alligator snapping turtle building. The heat pumps will be used to warm the water to ideal temperatures for the baby turtles. Due to complications associated with donations to federal facilities, TREES came to the rescue by facilitating the \$4,000 donation and purchase of the heat pumps.

Welcome Center's New Look



TREES volunteers have been keeping the Welcome/Heritage Center open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday since October. We no longer have the services of personnel from "Experience Works", an entity funded by the U.S. Dept. of Labor with a mission to train and re-employ people over 55 that have been out of the work force but need to or want to go back to work. TREES is optimistic that another "Experience Works" person will become available for the Welcome/Heritage Center. All TREES members and others are invited to come by the Center which has some clothing, birding items, drinks, etc., for sale. The coffee is free. We plan to add a line of very basic fishing equipment and supplies for sale. One side of the Center, furnished and maintained by the Johnston County Historical Society, is dedicated to antiques, tools, cooking and housekeeping pieces, clothing and other items dating from the early 1900's. Much of this memorabilia is from the operational era of Washita Farms prior to the time it was closed in the early 1940's as Lake Texoma was filling with water, covering much of the farming operation. With the help of Melissa Holder, Assistant Refuge Manager, we have redone our sightings board at the Center and changed it to wildlife sightings rather than just bird sightings. Also, we are in the process of putting a squirrel/raccoon/possum proof bird feeder in front of the Center as a demonstration project. Please stop by on Friday, Saturday or Sunday between 9:00AM and 3:00PM to see **your Center**, to visit and share your thoughts and ideas on serving the Refuge and improving the Center. Hoping to see you soon and we really want you to write your wildlife/bird sightings on our board.

In an effort to recruit more volunteers to man the Welcome/Heritage Center [WHC] a computer has been installed with a printer and internet access planned for early in 2011. Although there is nothing particularly difficult about keeping the WHC open an orientation will always be provided by a TREES member that has experience in keeping the Center open. There are several videos produced by the Fish & Wildlife Service available to watch. These have a lot of information about the National Refuge System and how it functions and interacts with wildlife to provide a safe haven "Refuge" for them while, at the same time, providing broad access to the public for fishing, viewing and enjoyment of the wondrous landscape and wildlife of our National Refuge System.





John Bruno accepting the Pennington Award from Mary Jane Nelson, May 2010

Tribute to John Bruno

He was one of our founding Board members and faithful Treasurer and financial officer. Conservation, stewardship, and preservation of wildlife habitat and water were his passion. The first weekend of every June would find him supporting another passion; the Kid's Fishing Derby. John left this life to claim his treasure in a pristine great beyond on July 21st, 2010. John, as you wished, we will at our convenience, go to a river, creek or lake and observe 15 minutes of silence while marveling in mother nature. Until later John Bruno.

Some TREES members may not have heard that one of our founding Board Members and TREES Treasurer, John Bruno, was taken from us last summer. If you are not aware a John Bruno Memorial account was established with Landmark Bank in Tishomingo. The Bruno family has asked that his friends make memorial donations to TREES/Kids Fishing Derby....or the Nature Conservancy. If you have not already done so please consider remembering John with a donation in his memory at Landmark Bank. If you are one of the many that have already done so the family, TREES and The Nature Conservancy thanks you. A donation can be mailed to the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge at 1200 S. Refuge Road, Tishomingo, Ok. 73460

At their September 2010 meeting Citizens for the Protection of the Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer [CPASA] asked for a volunteer to plant a tree in memory of one of their founding and most effective members, Mr. John Bruno, who was taken from this world in the summer of 2010. TREES jumped at the opportunity and was honored to have the chance to see this project through. TREES & CPASA members Ken Meyers, Floy & Lewis Parkhill and Terry Beals worked together with Jack Yates, City Manager and City personnel to see the project completed in time for the dedication at the October meeting of CPASA. A Sycamore tree was chosen to be planted at a carefully selected site in Pennington Park. Tishomingo City personnel dug a very ample hole for the tree and assisted in getting the rather large tree into the hole and planted with care. Following the dedication ceremony, attended by John's family, the tree has been staked and is being watered regularly by TREES volunteers. Thanks to CPASA, the family and the community for letting TREES be a part of this. May this Sycamore grow into a great and beautiful shade tree and perpetuate the memory of John. We understand that a plaque will be affixed to a stone from the Bruno property and placed near the tree. FRIENDSHIP IS A SHELTERING TREE...

The Big Sit bird count was a delightful experience on 10/10/10

The 2010 Big Sit bird count took place on October 10, 2010 at the Eagle Cove Observation Tower on Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge. The event was a big success again this year even though the number of species was less than last year due in part to lack of water near the site. The weather was clear and warm and there was great camaraderie and a sense of a common purpose among the 15 participants. The count day began at 6:30 am with a great horned owl perched high in a dead snag and silhouetted against the breaking dawn. Black-crowned night-herons were calling from the darkness as they flew to their daily roost. By the time the count was completed at about 4:30 pm, a total of 53 species had been identified. Other notable species included thousands of American white pelicans, the first white-fronted geese reported for the Refuge this fall, white-faced ibis, 8 species of hawk (including both adult and immature bald eagles and an osprey), six species of woodpeckers, a scissor-tailed flycatcher, and American pipits.

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. Dr. Doug Wood from Southeastern Oklahoma State University coordinates our local version of the count each year. He registers our site (named TREES), publicizes the event, organizes the participants and submits the results. He also makes the day enjoyable and educational by pointing out identification clues and little known facts about the species that are seen.

The Big Sit! is like a Big Day, or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The Big Sit! count rules state that observations can only be made from within a pre-determined 17-foot diameter circle (Eagle Cove Observation Tower). Big Sit participants can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there throughout the whole Big Sit! The area can be left and returned to as frequently as desired, but participants must be sure to return to the exact 17-foot diameter circle each time. The count is held annually on the second Sunday in October. The link to The Big Sit! website is: www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bigsit.html . Come join us next year!



Earl Brewer, Dr. Doug Wood & Dr. Bill Carter, Linda Adams, Mike Dugan , Ethan Cox and Bill Adams.



TREES Membership Form

Renew your membership if you haven't already!

Name _____

Second Name (if family membership) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone (Home) _____ (Cell) _____

Email _____

I want to save postage and printing. Email me a PDF version of future Newsletters

Membership Categories

- Pecan (Student) \$5 / year
- Sycamore (Individual) \$15 / year
- Persimmon (family) \$25 / year
- Post Oak (lifetime) \$250

Sponsorships: Donor Levels

- Button Bush \$50
- Boxelder \$100
- Sugarberry \$250
- American Elm \$500

~Donations are tax deductible~

Check all that apply to you:

- ____ Environmental Education
- ____ Birding
- ____ Photography
- ____ Publications
- ____ Fund Raising
- ____ Grant Writing
- ____ Other (please list)

Check all skills that apply to you

- ____ Leadership
- ____ Organization
- ____ Photography
- ____ Art
- ____ Writing
- ____ Advanced Birding
- ____ Web Design
- ____ Other (please describe)

You can visit the TREES web site at www.treesok.org for upcoming events and news

TREES

Tishomingo Refuge Ecology and Education Society
 12000 South Refuge Road
 Tishomingo, Oklahoma 73460

5th Annual Arbuckle-Simpson Nature Festival

Save this date&come to Tishomingo, Ok next Spring!

April 29th & 30th, 2011

The 5th annual Arbuckle-Simpson Nature Festival is set. The program has the best of the previous year's events and several new and different offerings. Some or several should be to the liking of outdoors-persons interested in wildlife, birding, viewing and interaction with the natural wonders of this beautiful country as April---she will come. There will be 2 events for digital photographers with 4 local mentors accomplished at capturing the wonders of mother-nature in beautiful settings found only in or around Tishomingo, the Capital of the Chickasaw Nation. Along with all this will be a photography contest. Of course, most of the events will be staged in the beautiful surroundings found only in this area; Tishomingo's National Wildlife Refuge & National Fish Hatchery, Pennington Creek and the Blue River. Last years bird banding demonstration with Dr. Doug Wood and the show put on by the migrating Bobolinks in the field of Vetch at the Refuge was a highlight of last year and is planned again for this year; with or without the migrants that took center-stage last year. On Friday a high point and new festival event will be 2 performances of "Its All About Birds" by the George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center. This is one of several free events! For those interested in fish & fishing Saturday offers a morning with a biologist at the Fish Hatchery, which is located along a beautiful stretch of Pennington Creek from which it sources it's water. The afternoon then has a session on Fly Fishing along an unbelievably pretty stretch of the Blue River. Contact the Tishomingo Wildlife Refuge at 580-371-2402 for a brochure with all the detail or go to the website at www.asnfok.net We hope to see you in this beautiful setting-come spring. You, friends & family are invited and always welcome and please spread the word.