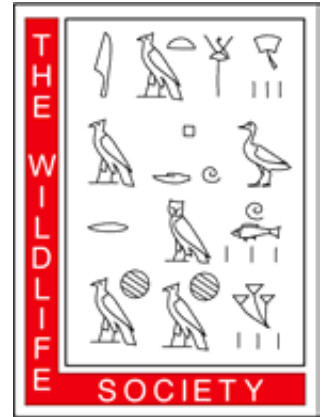


Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Annual Newsletter • Spring 2009



Welcome to the MSTWS Newsletter!

One of the many comments heard at the 2008 MSTWS Annual Meeting was that we needed a newsletter to keep everyone up to date on what's happening throughout the year. I knew this was one thing that I could accomplish as President. This was not an easy task. Like all of you, the "newsletter committee" has many other obligations and had to find time to squeeze in the task of not only recruiting items for the newsletter and editing those items, but learning to put a newsletter together from scratch. Thanks to all the people that submitted articles, updates, events and announcements.

For those that have not visited lately, our webpage (www.mstws.org) has been updated. **Ray Iglay** has done a wonderful job of adding some exciting new features. Look for Ray's article on the changes on page 3. Another new feature is the MSTWS listserv. You can access the sign up page for this through our website. This is a great way to share ideas, announcements and information throughout the year.

In the future, I hope to see the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society become more active in the state with regards to wildlife and conservation issues. I would also like to see the members become involved in steering the Chapter in the right direction. I hope that anyone with ideas, suggestions or comments will contact me, or any member of the board.

~Kathy Shelton

2009 MSTWS Officers

Past President – Philip Barbour

President – Kathy Shelton

President Elect – Shauna Ginger

Secretary/Treasurer – Andi Cooper

SE Section Representative – Kevin Nelms

Board Members – Scott Edwards, Bronson Strickland

CONGRATULATIONS!

• **Richard M. Kaminski** is being named holder of the James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation in Mississippi State University's College of Forest Resources. (<http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/kennedychair/>) Kaminski, a 25-year veteran at the school, is also being promoted to associate college dean. He is a professor of wildlife and a nationally recognized North American waterfowl and wetlands scientist, as well as a Fellow of The Wildlife Society and former associate editor for the organization's professional journals, "Wildlife Society Bulletin" and "The Journal of Wildlife Management."

• **Sabrina Chandler** was recently named vice-president of MS BEaR (Bear Education and Restoration) Group. She will serve one year as vice-president then move into the position of president. Sabrina also recently moved into her new position of refuge manager for the Panther Swamp NWR replacing **Bo Sloan**, who took a position in Alaska.

CP33 – Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

By: Lindsey Singleton and Wes Burger

CP33 - Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds is a conservation buffer practice available under the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. Under this practice, 30 to 120 foot conservation buffers of native warm-season grasses, legumes and other wildflowers, and shrubs are established around agricultural field borders. This practice is unique in that it is the first federal conservation practice designed specifically to meet the habitat objectives of a large scale wildlife conservation initiative, the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. These buffers provide essential cover and food resources for bobwhite quail and other grassland birds in intensively cropped agricultural systems.



Three years of monitoring on CP33 fields have established that bobwhite responded quickly and dramatically to the establishment of CP33 upland habitat buffers. On average, non-buffered crop fields had breeding densities of 1 male bobwhite per 96 acres, whereas CP33-buffered fields exhibited densities of 1 male bird for each 15 acres. This represents an average 540% increase in breeding male bobwhites on CP33-buffered fields over non-buffered fields. CP33 fields also supported a fall density of 1 covey per 87 acres whereas non-buffered fields exhibited fall densities of 1 covey per 190 acres. This represents an average 120% increase in fall coveys.

The establishment of the native warm-season grass and wildflower buffers also had a noteworthy effect on breeding songbird densities, specifically grassland-adapted species of conservation concern. Species such as the dickcissel, field sparrow, indigo bunting, and common yellowthroat exhibited considerable response to the establishment of CP33 buffers. Species that tend to thrive in agricultural landscapes, such as mourning dove and red-winged blackbird also benefited from the grassland buffers.

Since the CP33 program's initiation in 2004, 2,179 acres have been enrolled throughout 22 counties in Mississippi. Provided that the additional habitat available in CP33 buffers contribute to increased survival and reproduction of some bird species, upland habitat buffers have the capacity to affect population change for declining early successional species. The CP33 monitoring program is demonstrating that bobwhite population recovery goals are achievable in many landscapes. However, to succeed we need to apply these management strategies on a much larger scale.

Lindsey Singleton is a Research Associate and Wes Burger is a Professor of Wildlife Ecology in the Forest and Wildlife Research Center at Mississippi State University.

Mississippi Bat Working Group

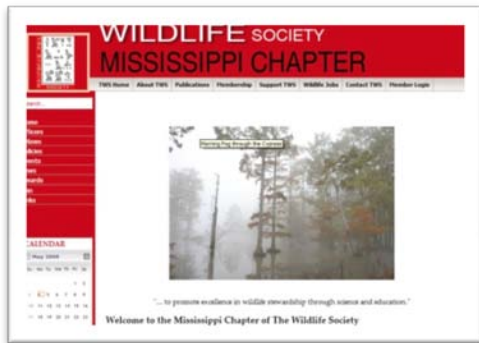
The Mississippi Bat Working Group (MBWG) held its 7th Annual Meeting at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (MMNS) on 29 January 2009. Included in the agenda were 10 presentations, a business meeting, and a discussion of issues related to bats nationwide.

The meeting was sponsored by the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society and Fordice Construction Co., Vicksburg. **Stephanie Steele** was elected as the new Secretary-Treasurer. The working group is

currently making plans and seeking sponsors for its summer mist net event. Members of MBWG also recently participated in the Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat 3rd Annual Meeting in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on 11 February 2009, and the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network at the same location on 12-13 February. **Alison McCartney** served as co-organizer for the Big-eared Bat Meeting. Several members will additionally be involved in a conservation planning meeting for Rafinesque's big-eared bats and southeastern myotis in Nashville, Tennessee on 31 March-1 April. **Chester Martin** is MBWG Chair and **Alison McCartney** is Co-chair. (Photo by Alison McCartney).



MSTWS Webpage Revamped!



Come one come all to the new MSTWS website! The website is accessible via www.mstws.org or through The Wildlife Society's website (www.wildlife.org → Sections and Chapters → Chapters → Mississippi). There were two main objectives for the site in fall 2008. We wanted to move from our old servers to those managed by The Wildlife Society and update the site. We have accomplished both! Our updates include:

updated officers, new events, news from our March Officer's meeting, and new links. During the website transfer and updating, we have made a few additions including a new homepage and an Awards page with a separate Mississippi Publications page to highlight MSTWS authors. With our website now hosted on a user friendly template, future additions and updates to the website will be easy. If you have any questions, comments, critiques, or concerns regarding the site, please feel free to email **Ray Iglay** at ri14@msstate.edu. We are also seeking pictures from our members to fill the site (all photographers will receive credit). *By Ray Iglay*

Ducks Unlimited

Theodore Roosevelt NWR Complex Upcoming Project



As part of Ducks Unlimited's continuous efforts to maintain and improve vital wildlife habitat, DU has committed to restore and enhance 675 acres of wetland habitat on Morgan Brake NWR in Holmes County and Panther Swamp NWR in Yazoo County. Morgan Brake and Panther Swamp comprise two of seven unitary tracts located within the 100,000-acre Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Theodore Roosevelt NWR is the largest refuge complex in the state of Mississippi.

Plans on the Morgan Brake tract include converting 20 former aquaculture ponds to moist soil management units, installing 11 water control structures, adding a new well, and refurbishing 3 existing wells. Discharge piping from the wells will facilitate timely flooding in late summer or early fall.

Four former agriculture fields will be converted to impoundments that will be managed in moist soil / crop rotation on Panther Swamp NWR. The proposed project will include the fabrication and installation of 12 water control structures and the establishment of a new well and pumping system. Upon completion, the Theodore Roosevelt National Wildlife Refuge Complex Project will offer improved maintenance and management capabilities and create a dependable water source for migrating waterfowl.

Delta National Forest Projects Completed

Delta National Forest is a large, contiguous block of bottomland hardwood forest, seasonally flooded timber and small sloughs, located in west-central Mississippi. It is one of the few hardwood forests remaining in the Mississippi Delta and the only bottomland hardwood forest in the National Forest System. The over 60,000-acre national forest provides important wintering and migration habitat for a variety of waterfowl including mallards, wood ducks, green-winged teal and gadwall.

As a continuation of our efforts to maintain and improve habitat within the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, DU partnered with the U.S. Forest Service on improvements to several tracts within Delta National Forest last year. Projects on the Fordice Tract, Cypress Bayou Tract and Greentree Number 8 were completed in October 2008.

DU replaced ten water control structures and installed a new pump to enable more efficient management of 300 acres on the Fordice Tract. A new levee and water control structure were installed on the Cypress Bayou Tract, an 18-acre scrub/shrub impoundment. The Greentree Number 8, also known as the South Greentree, was renovated by replacing one water control structure. Water levels can now be more easily managed on this 490-acre impoundment. The improvements on all of these tracts will provide vital resources for waterfowl and improved hunting opportunities for waterfowlers.

"Delta National Forest has had an outstanding working relationship with Ducks Unlimited over the past ten years. Without DU participation very little of the habitat enhancement work would have been possible. Through their expertise, funding and partnership numerous projects have been completed that provide enhanced habitat for over wintering waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species," said Larry Moore District Ranger for Delta National Forest. *Submitted by Andi Cooper*

MARK YOUR CALENDERS!

The chapter will hold its annual meeting on October 1st and 2nd in Jackson at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. All are invited to attend. The Board, led by President-Elect **Shauna Ginger**, has been hard at work planning the meeting. The meeting will consist of a plenary session of invited speakers, invited papers covering topics of interest to members, submitted papers, and business meeting. Also, the Board has planned an evening social and committees are at work on new officer nominations and awards. **Dr. Michael Hutchins**, Executive Director/CEO of TWS, will be the keynote speaker at the meeting. Please visit the website at www.mstws.org or through the TWS website for more information concerning the meeting.



Come be a part of
the excitement!

September 20-24, 2009

- ✧ Attend dozens of technical sessions.
- ✧ Choose from a full day of workshops.
- ✧ Enjoy many networking opportunities.
- ✧ Keep up to date with current technology at the Trade Show.
- ✧ Tour local attractions. Welcome Reception at Monterey Bay Aquarium.
- ✧ New! Career Fair - Students and professionals, meet potential employers.



www.wildlife.org/conference

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Mississippi Amphibian Monitoring Program (MAMP) is looking for volunteers to conduct frog surveys statewide. MAMP is part of a larger nationwide program called the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP). For more information about the program you can go to the NAAMP site at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/naamp. Much like the more widely known Breeding Bird Surveys, MAMP surveys are used to assess frog and toad population trends. Volunteers will run a set route 3 times a year, in the late winter, spring and summer. To participate volunteers must take and pass a NAAMP frog call quiz. For more information on how to become a MAMP volunteer please contact **Kathy Shelton** at krshelton64@gmail.com.

Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture

The LMVJV (www.lmvjv.org) – a conservation partnership of 15 state, federal, and private agencies and organizations dedicated to strategic bird conservation – recently hired two partnership coordinators to help integrate landscape-scale biological planning with on-the-ground conservation delivery. Each will be focused on a separate Bird Conservation Region: **Keith McKnight** on the West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas and **Steve Brock** on the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Keith most recently worked for DU where he served as a Regional Biologist responsible for coordinating conservation delivery projects in Texas and New Mexico. Prior to his job in Texas, Keith worked out of DU's National Headquarters in Memphis, where he served as a Conservation Program Specialist, Manager of Conservation Programs, and ultimately as Director of Conservation Programs. In those positions, Keith led DU's *Ducks and More Program*, supervised the National Headquarters GIS staff, served as DU's staff support to the NAWCA Council, developed multi-scale international conservation strategies for shorebird conservation, and served as DU's liaison to national and international bird conservation plans to include Partners in Flight, the North American Waterbird



Conservation Plan, and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Keith holds a Ph.D. from Auburn University where he studied the ecology of wintering Gadwall and American Coot. Keith earned a B.S. and an M.S. from Texas A&M where he studied wetland regeneration ecology on reclaimed mines. Steve comes to work for the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture partnership from the USFWS where his most recent position had him serving out of the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta as Deputy Refuge Supervisor responsible for oversight and management of more than 35 National Wildlife Refuges in the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Prior to moving to Atlanta, Steve served as the Deputy Refuge Manager

at St. Catherine Creek NWR outside of Natchez, MS. Steve also worked as a Private Lands Biologist for the USFWS out of Ferriday, LA and as a Wildlife Biologist on the Homochitto National Forest for the Forest Service. In that mix of federal jobs, Steve spent a few years venturing in the world of self employment as a Consulting Wildlife Biologist. Early in his career, Steve spent four years with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as a Wildlife Biologist Supervisor overseeing their biological programs in an 18 county management district. Steve received a B.S. and M.S. from Mississippi State University, where he evaluated moist-soil seed production on Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge. Please welcome Keith and Steve to their new positions. Keith will be stationed in Tyler, TX and can be reached by e-mail (steven_mcknight@fws.gov) or phone (903-363-8365). Steve is stationed in the LMVJV office in Vicksburg, MS and can also be reached by e-mail (steve_c_brock@fws.gov) or phone (601-529-4235).

Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council

By Russ Walsh

“Only you can prevent forest fires.” This is perhaps one of the most widely known and successful slogans in history. Smokey Bear’s message has marched on like a wildfire for decades (pun intended), educating many about fire safety and wildfire prevention. This message, coupled with the onslaught of anti-fire campaigns, increased liability issues, and urbanization, markedly decreased the prevalence of fire on the Southern landscape. For many wildlife species and fire enthusiasts, this poses quite the challenge. As such, those who are prescribed fire devotees have continually searched for ways to revive and further its use.



Several Southern states have developed prescribed fire councils. These councils bring together those interested in prescribed fire to work for a common goal —promote and protect prescribed fire. In many states, these councils have become *the* leading voice on prescribed fire issues. Recognizing the need for a council in Mississippi, several organizations set about to begin its development in August 2007.

The mission of MPFC is to partner all groups or individuals with a vested interest in prescribed fire to increase occurrence of burning on public and private lands to restore ecological function, enhance wildlife and plant communities, and reduce hazardous forest or grassland fuel loads. The objectives of this focused group are to:

- Promote public awareness about the value and benefits of prescribed fire.
- Protect the ability to use prescribed fire as a management tool.
- Develop expertise in prescribed fire by sharing technical and ecological information.
- Promote safety, training, and research in the art and science of prescribed fire.
- Review prescribed fire practices, regulations, and policy and suggest improvements.
- Promote and facilitate an increase in the number of acres burned annually by prescribed fire in Mississippi.



Examples of current initiatives include developing I&E material, planning field days, addressing training inadequacies and high training costs, and burn ban and non-attainment issues, county resolutions supporting prescribed fire use, and burn manager insurance costs.

For more information about MPFC please visit www.msfirecouncil.org or contact **Russ Walsh**, Chair at msfirecouncil@gmail.com or 601-408-3399. For further information on the National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils please visit <http://www.garxfire.com/coalition.htm>.

NOMINATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION AWARDS

The Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society is seeking nominations for Outstanding Publication awards in the following categories: Peer-reviewed Journal Article, Technical Publication, Popular Article, Book, and Media Product (video, DVD, web-based tool, radio program, etc.). The Mississippi Chapter will recognize high-quality publications that represent a significant advance in wildlife biology with respect to scientific knowledge, application to management, or public awareness and involvement.

To be eligible for an award, at least one author must be a member of the Mississippi Chapter of TWS at the time of nomination and the publication must be published within the last 3 years (2007 – 2009). Self nominations are acceptable.

To nominate a publication, please send an electronic copy of the publication and a description of why the publication represents a significant contribution to wildlife biology and/or management to: **Dr. Sam Riffell** (sriffell@cfr.msstate.edu), Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, Box 9690, Mississippi State, MS 39762. Deadline for nominations is September 1, 2009. Winners will be announced at the October meeting of the Mississippi Chapter of TWS.

BOARD MEMBER NOMINATIONS~

We are now accepting nominations for board members for the 09/10 year. Currently President-elect, 2 board member positions, and the Representative to the Southeastern Section are available. More information on these positions can be found on our website under “Bylaws”. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in any of the positions please contact Chapter President **Kathy Shelton** at krshelton63@gmail.com. All board members must be current members of the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

May 14, 2009 *Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting* Whitehead Advanced Technology Center, Ellisville MS. 9am – 3pm. For more information - www.msfirecouncil.org.

September 20-24, 2009 *The Wildlife Society 16th Annual Conference* Monterey CA. For more information - <http://joomla.wildlife.org>

September 30, 2009 *MS BEaR Group Fall Meeting* Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Jackson MS. For more information - www.MSBear.org.

October 1-2, 2009 *Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting* Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Jackson MS. For more information, go to www.mstws.org.