



February 8 - 12, 2009

## Speaker Biographies

### **Matt Conner**

*Refuge Ranger, White River National Wildlife Refuge*

Matt grew up with an 'outdoors' family in Springfield, Illinois. By his freshman year in college at Southern Illinois University, he knew he wanted to work for a natural resource agency with a goal of spending his life teaching others about the outdoors and the sustainable, responsible uses for our natural resources. He completed a bachelor's degree and graduate school at Southern Illinois University in forestry with an emphasis in recreation management. During and after school, his work spanned some of the country's most beautiful and interesting places, including Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Glacier National Park, Independence National Historical Park, and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. His passion has always centered on the development of educational programs and youth/community outreach. After arriving in St. Charles, Arkansas and the White River National Wildlife Refuge as Visitor Services Manager, he is still continuing in his passion for building a successful outreach program. The local communities are supportive of the refuge and Matt continues to build ties with partner groups to benefit the refuge and community in every possible way.

### **Daryl Jones**

*Program Coordinator, Natural Resource Enterprises Program (NRE) - Mississippi State Extension Service*

The Natural Resource Enterprises Program (NRE) at Mississippi State University was established in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Cooperative Extension Service at MSU to educate landowners in the south about enterprise development (i.e., fee hunting and angling, wildlife watching, agritourism), compatible habitat management practices, and integrating enterprise operations with agriculture and forestry. As Program Coordinator, Daryl and his team have worked with program partners in Alabama, Arkansas, and South Carolina to provide educational workshops, demonstrations, and resources to inform landowners and agency professionals about enterprise opportunities and associated habitat management on private lands. Since 2005, NRE has conducted or facilitated 19 landowner workshops and educational events drawing 953 participants, including 763 landowners from eight states.

**Eric Maynard**

*Photographer & Director, Delta Rivers Nature Center, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission*

As a professional photographer *and* as the Delta Nature Center director with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Eric understands the allure of nature to photographers, and is equipped to give advice to property owners about how best to cater to those who are interested in natural settings. Eric also enjoys teaching photography at the local community college and teacher workshops.

**Rebecca (Becky) J. McPeake**

*Associate Professor - Wildlife, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service*

Becky received her B.S. from the University of Missouri-Columbia, M.S. from Michigan State University, and Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. Previously, she worked at Cornell University and the Missouri Department of Conservation as a human dimensions research specialist. Becky is interested in the "human aspect" of wildlife management which includes wildlife enterprises and habitat management. She works throughout Arkansas training private landowners in habitat improvement for wildlife recreation and enjoyment.

**Shelly Plante**

*Nature Tourism Coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

As Nature Tourism Coordinator for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Shelly Plante finished the Great Texas Wildlife Trails with the completion of the Prairies and Pineywoods Wildlife Trails East and West this year. She has been a coordinator for the annual Great Texas Birding Classic for the past 10 years, helping to develop the event, grow participation, direct over \$650,000 to coastal avian habitat conservation projects through the event, and build a partnership with the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory as event co-coordinator. Plante also coordinated and helped develop a new Paddling Trails Program for the state of Texas that builds partnerships between local communities, creating additional sustainable eco-tourism opportunities statewide. Through this program, TPWD is increasing public access to Texas waters while helping local communities build their nature tourism offerings.

Plante has given presentations for over a decade to local, national and international conferences on topics such as development of wildlife and birding trails, marketing local businesses and communities through nature tourism, developing a canoeing and kayaking trail, avian habitat conservation through birding trails and activities, and landowner workshops on nature tourism. Conference speaking engagements include sessions and programs at Watchable Wildlife Annual Conferences, the ANGADI National Meeting (an organization of landowners in Mexico), Southeast Partners in Flight Annual Meeting, Texas Travel Industry Association's Annual Summit, Texas

Trails Network State Conference, Bird Conservation Through Education: A National Gathering, as well as many Texas-based landowner workshops, naturalists presentations, Audubon presentations, community development seminars and more.

### **Jody Pagan**

*Wildlife Biologist, Five Oaks Wildlife Services*

Jody worked as a biologist for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for twelve years with state, federal, and non-profit agency employees to restore thousands of acres of wetland in Arkansas. During the latter part of his career with NRCS he traveled the country working with the greatest minds in wetland restoration and management and was able to play a major role in restoring hundreds of thousands acres of wetland through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) across the country.

In 2005 Jody joined George H. Dunklin, Jr. to create Five Oaks Wildlife Services. Their mission is to bring understandable science and training for proper wetland management to private landowners. The vision of Five Oaks Wildlife Services includes service to public land managers and private landowners with the most up to date information on wetland restoration and waterfowl habitat management. They are the "applied scientist" of the tight knit waterfowl community and their personal relationship with many of the country's leading experts allows them to conduct one of a kind educational seminars and workshops.

### **Shannon Roberts**

*Training Coordinator, Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center-UALR*

Shannon Roberts joined UALR Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center in November 2007. She has a Bachelor of Science in Marketing from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with experience in small business ownership, event planning, insurance, and public speaking in the private sector.

### **Dr. Dan Scheiman**

*Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Arkansas*

Dr. Dan Scheiman is Bird Conservation Director for Audubon Arkansas, the state office of National Audubon Society. Dan has a B.S. from Cornell University, M.S. from Eastern Illinois University, and Ph.D. from Purdue University. His projects include coordinating the Important Bird Area program, and conservation of waterbirds, quail, and the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. He travels throughout Arkansas to lecture about birds. He has been birding for 20 years and has over 10 years of bird research experience.