

## Tennessee Valley Authority Wildlife Team Enhancing Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity at Muscle Shoals/Wilson Dam Reservation

For the past eight years, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) employees, community volunteers and local environmental partners have planned, implemented, and maintained wildlife habitat at the Muscle Shoals/Wilson Dam Reservation. The reservation encompasses 3,036 acres in the northwest corner of Alabama and contains many large natural areas mixed with public recreation facilities. The wildlife habitat enhancement team has made steady progress since the program's initial WHC *Wildlife at Work* certification in 2000 and remains committed to its community partnerships, which are instrumental in promoting environmental education, recreational trails, and public awareness and appreciation for habitats on the reservation.



A public partnership with the Shoals Environmental Alliance was formed in 2002 to promote and

enhance the walking trails and natural areas on the reservation. Over the past few years, the partnership has contributed approximately 4,800 voluntary hours and donated over \$35,000 in materials and supplies to establish a native plant garden bordered by a handicap-accessible trail. The native plant garden trail was opened to the public in 2004. The wildlife team also has met with several other local groups interested in partnering with TVA to enhance public use of the reservation.

From left, Samantha Strickland, Damien Simbeck, Ralph Stumpe, Samantha Hartsell, R.J. Moore and Randy McCann are among the TVA employees who have worked to enhance wildlife habitat and diversity on the Muscle Shoals/Wilson Dam reservation.

Community volunteers and local Cub Scout troops assisted in expanding the bluebird trail on-site by constructing and erecting additional nest boxes. The trail continues to expand and now contains 103 monitored nest boxes. Nesting success continues to increase with volunteers reporting a total of 289 fledglings from 101 nests in 2007 and 345 fledglings from the same nests in 2008. The first tree swallow nest on the reservation was recorded in 2006, and four nest boxes were occupied by tree swallows in 2007. Tree swallow use of the bluebird trail increased in 2008, with seven boxes used and 36 fledglings raised. Although tree swallows are common in Alabama as a migrant, this is one of the more southern nesting locations recorded. Other species recorded in 2008 included the Carolina chickadee, Carolina wren, and Tufted titmouse.

The wildlife team continues to develop more roadside wildflower areas with the addition of two new areas in 2007. They have plans for more wildflower areas to be created in 2009. The site currently has converted approximately 70 acres of turf grass to native

meadow grasses. They are working with Alabama Forestry Commission to develop a controlled burning program to enhance these areas.

The wildlife team and partners also have been working for the past three years to eradicate exotic vegetation and re-establish a diversity of native vegetation. The team removed approximately 15 acres of Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) in 2008 and plans to remove exotic vegetation from an additional 30 acres in the next three years. More than 200 native flowering trees have been planted to date.

Congratulations to the Muscle Shoals/Wilson Dam Reservation wildlife management team for their continued biodiversity conservation work these past eight years and the 2008 Wildlife Habitat Council Wildlife at Work Recertification!

For more information on the Muscle Shoals/Wilson Dam Reservation project, please call TVA at 256-386-3440.