

E.O. WILSON BIOPHILIA CENTER WELCOMES FIRST STUDENTS

By Krista Conchar-Haynes

The staff at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center on the Nokuse Plantation, located just east of Freeport, welcomed fourth grade teachers from Walton, Okaloosa, Bay and Leon Counties for training during the last week of September.

The teachers started their training with wetland collecting, trying to identify aquatic flora and fauna at the center's turtle pond. Then they walked Christy's Trail to learn the components of the endangered Longleaf pine forest ecosystem and continued on to the site of the center's harvester ant mounds and prescribed burn plots.

Teachers also toured the exhibit hall and met the center's Florida pine snake, Sweetie. They learned lessons about gopher tortoises, prescribed burning, the Longleaf pine understory and the namesake of Nokuse Plantation, Florida black bears.

The center has plans for another teacher training date in the spring.

On Oct. 13, the Biophilia Center welcomed the first classes of fourth grade students from four Walton County schools. The curriculum at the center works collectively with parhan-dle school districts to improve FCAT scores in science and instill a love of nature in the next generation.

Lesson plans are based around the



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Nokuse Plantation's mascot, Rosco, points out a gray rat snake found on the center's burn plots

one of the most diverse and endangered ecosystems in North America, the Longleaf pine forest of which, more than 30 plant and animal species are considered endangered or threatened, including the gopher tortoise and the red-cockaded woodpecker.

For more information, visit the center's Web site at www.eowilsoncenter.org.

NONIE'S ARK



SUBMITTED PHOTO

NONIE VISITS: Fourth graders at Van R. Butler Elementary were visited by Nonie's Ark Oct. 2. The visit is part of the 4th grade science unit "Life in the Longleaf Pine Forest Ecosystem." Over the next two months all 4th graders in Walton County will make five visits to the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center at Nokuse Plantation in Freeport. The teachers will present 10 lessons on the Longleaf Pine Forest Ecosystem and the students will participate in field work and experiments.