

# Wings

Newsletter for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges

Vol. XII No. 2 May 2005

## What's Happening at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge?

You may have noticed that there are signs posted that say “DO NOT ENTER – Colonial Bird Nesting Area” on the beach at Pea Island. These signs are nothing new but simply a part of wildlife and habitat management techniques used to mark important areas for nesting birds. Many of the birds that nest in these areas (piping plovers, oystercatchers, terns, etc) require protection under the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Also, Pea Island was established as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife to advance the purposes of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The refuge protects these nesting areas by posting closed areas with at least a 50-100 meter buffer from the nesting sites and restricting pets in the general vicinities of nesting areas. Additional signs will say “NO PETS ...” and “NOTICE ... biologically sensitive area ...”



Birds like Piping Plover (above) and Oystercatchers (below) nest on the beaches of Pea Island.



Photo credit: FWS

Through surveys conducted three times a month (more often in spring), refuge biological staff monitor when the birds return to the Outer Banks. Usually, birds start to pick potential nesting sites shortly after their return. When birds exhibit a site preference, biological staff mark the area with “symbolic fencing” – DO NOT ENTER signs and string between the signs, marking the area as closed to all entry. The “NO PETS” and “NOTICE” signs will also be posted in selected areas. These areas will remain posted until the end of the nesting season in August or September.

When visiting the refuge this summer, remember that birds and other wildlife make the refuge their home. Be respectful, do not enter closed areas, and follow all refuge regulations and signs. For more information, please stop by the Visitor Center and pick up a Piping Plover Fact Sheet, or visit [peaisland.fws.gov](http://peaisland.fws.gov).

### Join Today!!



Become a member of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society. Send a check with your annual membership or volunteer today!

Regular - \$10  
Wildlife - \$50  
Donor - \$200  
Corporate - \$500

Please make check payable to CWRS and mail to:  
Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society  
PO Box 1808  
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

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## Volunteer Update

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- Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is looking for volunteers to work at the visitor center information desk one day a week. This job would include: representing the refuges, answering visitor questions, and running the book store. Volunteers should be outgoing and willing to spend a day at Pea Island!! If you are interested, please call Susie Ahlfeld at 252-987-1118.



*This could be you! Join the refuge team!*

- The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society is becoming more active in 2005. The refuges have asked the Society to coordinate volunteer groups to accomplish many projects throughout the two refuges. If you are interested in hearing more about these projects and getting involved, call Susie Ahlfeld at 252-987-1118 or Society President Tom White at 252-473-3512.

- Thanks to all of the volunteers who assisted with the spring Wings Over Water May 12-15! Thanks to many individuals and groups for their assistance in making this event possible.

- Welcome to the 2005 summer interns! Chad Beemiller, Andy Heisey, Allen Bridgman, Alicia Wiseman, Shelley Meador, Anthony Davis, Wendy Russell, and Amy Geddie.

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## Red Wolf Update

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The Red Wolf Recovery Team continues to monitor red wolves as well as known or suspected hybrid and coyote activities. During the first quarter of the year, the Red Wolf Program wildlife biologists counted a total of 64 collared wolves and 9 collared sterile hybrids/coyotes on the Alligator River. The red wolf Adaptive Management Plan is being finalized and should be available for distribution in May 2005.

Other updated statistics for the entire red wolf population are as follows:

153 captive wolves (75 males and 78 females)  
captive wild red wolves are located at 35 cooperating facilities across the U.S.



*Photo Credit: FWS*

*Come out to Alligator River this summer for a "howling"!*

Many outreach activities are planned for the summer months including the popular "howlings" on Wednesday evenings beginning June 22 and continuing through the first week of September. For the howling schedule, visit [http://www.redwolves.com/about\\_rwc/howlings.html](http://www.redwolves.com/about_rwc/howlings.html) or <http://www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/spec.html#howling>.

Want to help these refuges in a really concrete way??

Join a  
**Friends of the Refuge Work Team!!**

The group meets the second Thursday of each month at

7:30 pm at the FWS office in Manteo!

**Come and join us!**

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## Fire Updates

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The District 1 Fire Crew pulled off a historic burn on April 6, 2005 at **Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge**. The crew led by Donnie Harris burned 4,934 acres of the West Marsh, the largest contiguous block of unditched marsh on the east coast. The burn successfully reduced 19 years of fuel build up which improved habitat conditions for migratory birds. A controlled burn was also conducted at **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge**. Approximately 757 acres stretching from the south end of Pea Island north to New Inlet Boat ramp received a patchy “mosaic” burn by a burn crew made up of employees from Pea Island, Alligator River, Pocosin Lakes and Mattamuskeet. Objectives for the burn were to reduce hazardous fuels and improve wildlife habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Congratulations to Amy Midgett for being selected for the Firefighter Equipment Operation position for Alligator River.

Alligator River has a new Flextrac custom built by Hico Company in Canada. Many modifications had to be made to make sure the machine would meet refuge needs. We added a 200 gallon water tank, attached a large grill to the front of the machine to better equip it to knock down trees, installed a wench to the rear, and built hatches to aid in cleaning equipment.

Wildfire season is upon us. During this time, fire personnel make daily and weekly checks on equipment to ensure readiness and a firefighter gets a daily fire weather report from the National Weather Service and broadcasts this on the radio to all refuges. Indicators such as humidity, rainfall, wind, drought measurements, etc. are used to determine the “readiness” level on a scale of 1-5. On readiness days 4 or 5, everything is ripe for a fire and the fire crew must be ready to fight fire.

### ATTENTION!

#### -NEW VISITOR CENTER HOURS!!!

The Visitor Center will be staying open until 5PM from May until August. Stop by and see what’s new!

-View the summer program schedule at

<http://www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/spec.html>.

## Pea Island-an eFieldTrip Destination!

On Monday, April 18, 2005, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge broadcast its first eFieldTrip of the refuge. School children from all over the world were able to learn about the sea turtle conservation efforts currently underway at the refuge and the important role refuges play in wildlife conservation. Beautifully detailed pictures and movie clips made for an interactive and exciting field trip for students of all ages.

The eFieldTrip had several components. The students participated in a Virtual Visit – an interactive “visit” of the refuge – through pictures, video, and written description. During this refuge visit, they kept journals of their experiences, emotions, and impressions. The week following the eFieldTrip premier, the students had the opportunity to “Ask the Experts” questions about the refuge, sea turtles, or wildlife conservation in general. Refuge staff and volunteers answered questions from students who live as far away as Hawaii! On April 28<sup>th</sup>, the refuge staff conducted a live web chat to directly interact with students via the internet. The extended time frame gave the greatest number of students the opportunity to participate in the Virtual Visit and interact with refuge staff.

Visit Pea Island on the web at <http://www.efieldtrips.org> from now until June 30, 2005.



*On Pea Island, Loggerheads, Leatherbacks, and Green Sea Turtles (pictured above) may use the beach to nest.*

### Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Board Of Directors

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## 30 Second Interview with Susan Ahlfield Interpretive Specialist-Pea Island NWR

1. How long have you been working for Alligator River and Pea Island?

*I moved here in July of 2004, so almost one year.*

2. What do you do as an Interpretive Specialist?

*I am responsible for the Visitor Center at Pea Island – working with volunteers, managing the sales operation for the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, and most other aspects of the Visitor Center. I also supervise Alligator River interns (Chad and Andy), and manage the workamper program for both refuges. I also write and coordinate articles for this newsletter!*

3. How long have you been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

*I have been working with the Service for a little over 3 years. I have worked at Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland and at A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Boynton Beach, Florida.*



*Refuge staff frequently work outside of their regular duties. Here, Susie is assisting with a prescribed burn.*

4. What do you hope to gain from working with refuges?

*I enjoy teaching people through education and interpretation, and I hope to continue to do that throughout my career. I also hope to continue to move around and work at many different national wildlife refuges. Ultimately, one day, I would like to be a Deputy Refuge Manager.*

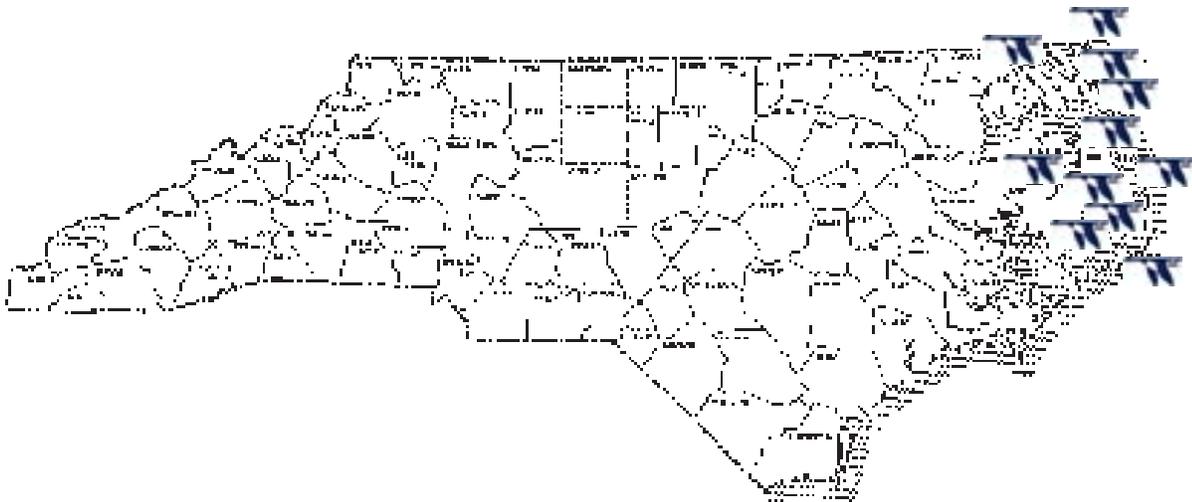
5. What do you like best about your job at Pea Island?

*I enjoy the visitors to the refuge and the people I work with.*



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<http://alligatorriver.fws.gov>  
<http://peaisland.fws.gov>



<http://northcarolina.fws.gov>