



The Wings Newsletter Flies Again

The Wings newsletter has been on hiatus for four years. We hope to issue the newsletter on a quarterly basis again this year.

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society is a non-profit organization established and incorporated in 1989 by a group of local citizens to provide support for Alligator River, Pea Island, and other national wildlife refuges in eastern North Carolina.

The Society has three purposes: generate funds to support programs and activities, assist in the recruitment of volunteers, and provide a voice for the members of the Society at a local, state, and national level.

Thank You, Volunteers

Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges are staffed by 36 employees of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. That staff is responsible for managing 160,000 acres and serving 2.7 million visitors on the two refuges.

Volunteers contribute another 18,800 hours of labor, the equivalent of more than 9 full time staff members. There were 10,100 hours donated at Alligator River and 9,700 hours at Pea Island.

The volunteers come from three sources: the local community, college interns who are housed on the refuge, and work campers who reside in their recreational vehicles on the refuge in exchange for their work.

The volunteers staff the visitor center, teach educational programs and lead tours, assist with biological monitoring and fire management, care for captive red wolves, and maintain refuge grounds, buildings, and vehicles.

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Awards Banquet

The Society holds a banquet each year to recognize volunteers for their service to the refuges. At the last banquet on November 20, 2010 at Pamlico Jack's Restaurant in Nags Head, Marlene Schumm was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. Marlene has provided more than 500 hours of service to the refuges. She has helped with children at outreach events and school clubs this past year and assisted with bird walks, canoe trips, and The Big Sit. Marlene has served as a meeter and greeter at the Visitor Center and on the Wings Over Water Steering Committee.

Other volunteers recognized at the banquet included: Warren Davis with 8,000 hours of service, Pat Moore with 3500 hours, Ron Marchand with 2500 hours, Ken Wynne with 2000 hours, and DJ Stark with 1500 hours. The following volunteers were recognized for donating 1,000 hours: Peggy Eubank, Tammy Johns, Bryant Culbreth, Chris Haggard, and Paul Goudy.

Each person who volunteered in 2010 received a stained glass bird suitable for hanging in a window.

Wings over Water

The Wings over Water Festival was held from November 9-14, 2010 on the national wildlife refuges and other locations throughout northeastern North Carolina. 950 participants enjoyed the 93 activities featured over the six-day event. Participation has increased 11 percent per year for the past three years.

The traditional birding and paddling tours were well-attended again this year. New events, such as the kid-friendly Wildlife Tracking on Creek Cut Trail program, found excited audiences. Author and guitarist Bill Thompson gave an entertaining keynote address on the Perils of Birding.

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Officers

President: Stanley Oliver
Vice President: Joyce Bornfried
Secretary: Martha Howell
Treasurer: Warren Davis
Board of Directors: Gail Dreis, Pam Landrum, Ann Groves, Tracey Rock

Alligator River Office and Visitor Center

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service broke ground in 2010 on an 18,000-square foot office and visitor center for the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge on U.S. Route 64 in Manteo across from the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site.

The 12,000-square foot office will provide the staff with efficient work space. The 6,000-square foot visitor center will serve as the Gateway to the National Wildlife Refuges in Northeastern North Carolina. It will have exhibit space, an auditorium, a classroom, and a gift shop and bookstore. There will be an outdoor education pavilion, information kiosks, and nature trails.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided the funding for the facility. The building will be completed in late 2011.

Wildfest

Wildfest, an environmental education event oriented towards children and families, was held on Friday, October 29, 2010 at a new venue, the Wright Brothers National Memorial. The large Wright Brothers Pavilion at the Memorial provided a great location for 17 agencies and organizations to teach participants about the conservation of natural resources. Five hundred fifty attendees participated in the activities at each table.

Pamlico Joe performed music with environmental themes and had the audience singing along with him. Forty-three volunteers from First Flight High School's Advancement Via Individual Determination Program staffed ten stations for the Fish and Wildlife Service, including the Wildlife Olympics, face-painting, fish prints, and build-a-bird.

Tram Tours

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased an open air tram in 2010 with which to conduct tours of the refuges. The tram can carry 35 passengers and is equipped with a public address system. The refuge staff and interns conducted tours on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge twice a week during the summer and monthly tours during the rest of the year. Total of 480 visitors have taken tours on the tram.

Pea Island and Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuges have also used the tram for tours.

Climate Change Project

In 2008, Duke Energy donated one million dollars to The Nature Conservancy to conduct research on measures to mitigate the effects of climate change on the coastal areas of North Carolina. The Nature Conservancy decided to conduct the research on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and hired Brian Boutin, Ph.D., as the project coordinator in 2009.

The project is being conducted along Point Peter Road on the east side of U.S. Route 264 between Manns Harbor and Stumpy Point. A structure has been installed in a large drainage ditch and another has been installed in a secondary ditch to prevent brackish water from moving into areas occupied by plants not tolerant of brackish water. Four hundred feet of marl oyster reef and 100 feet of oyster shell bag reef have been created to control shoreline erosion. Forty acres of flood tolerant trees have been planted and 11.5 acres of common reed (*Phragmites australis*) has been controlled.

Another 300 feet of oyster shell bag reef and 400 feet of marl reef will be created in 2011. More structures will also be installed to plug drainage ditches.

Volunteers are needed to fill the bags of oyster shells. Interested parties should contact Brian Boutin at bboutin@tnc.org.

The results of the project will guide efforts in other areas of the coast to mitigate the effects of climate change. Information on the project can be found by going to The Nature Conservancy's web site at www.nature.org and following the links to the North Carolina Chapter home page.

Fire Program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has 20 wildland firefighters deployed on the nine National Wildlife Refuges in eastern North Carolina to protect around 400,000 acres scattered over 20,000 square miles. The firefighters are responsible for maintaining fire breaks to facilitate prescribed burning and wildfire control, conducting the prescribed burns, and fighting wildfires. They prepare year round maintaining equipment and keeping themselves physically fit for their duties. They must be recertified annually through physicals and fitness testing.

The area with the highest priority for this season's prescribed burning is the part of the refuge north of Stumpy Point along U.S. Route 264. Those prescribed fires will protect Stumpy Point Community from wildfires by reducing the amount of available fuel in addition to maintaining wildlife habitat. Prescribed fires in that area are especially tricky to plan because the organic soil must be moist so that it will not burn.

The firefighters have battled two wildfires recently. One fire was along U.S. Route 264 on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge; the other was along Shore Drive on the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Both fires occurred on the windiest day of the year and the relative humidity dropped to the extremely low levels. A quick response from firefighters from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Department of Natural Resources Forest Service, and local volunteer fire departments kept these fires from growing into very large fires.

Fire Management Officer Tom Crews noted, "Our firefighters do superb work. They are dedicated and professional in their duty to their mission - providing protection to the public, our neighboring communities and our natural resources in a safe and cost effective manner."

Red Wolf Recovery Program

There are an estimated 110 to 130 wolves in the Red Wolf Recovery Area. The area covers 1.7 million acres in five Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington, and Beaufort Counties in northeastern North Carolina. There are a known 70 wolves (61 wolves in 26 packs and 9 wolves not associated with a pack) with radio transmitters. There are 11 breeding pairs in the 26 packs. There were 42 pups born in 9 litters during the 2010 whelping season. The pups are not included in the 70 known wolf total.

Sea Turtles

The thirteen-mile long shoreline of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is the site of sea turtle nesting during the summer months. One group of refuge volunteers (Turtle Patrol) patrol the beach early in the summer and look for signs that turtles crawled up on the beach and laid eggs. Refuge staff documents the location of the nests and relocate the eggs to safe locations if necessary. Another group of volunteers (Turtle Watch) watches the nests when it is time for the eggs to hatch and insures that they get to the ocean without predators eating them.

In 2010, there were 30 turtle crawls. Fourteen of the crawls led to nests; sixteen were 'false crawls'. Refuge biologists relocated nine nests. Two nests were lost to storms.

There were an estimated 1,276 eggs in all of the nests and 813 hatchlings emerged from those eggs. The average incubation period was 51 days. The nests averaged 114 eggs per nest.

Eleven nests had loggerhead sea turtles; one nest had green sea turtles. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classifies both species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

School Programs

Most customers of the refuges' services come to the refuge to hunt, fish, watch birds, take photos, or learn about nature. For some of the refuges' youngest customers, the refuge staff comes to them.

Visitor Services Specialists Cindy Heffley and Abbey Reibel have both developed programs that they deliver to students in their schools. Volunteers from the community and college interns assist them with the programs.

Cindy brings lessons to Dare County's 75 middle school-aged children in Junior Naturalists Clubs at Manteo Middle School, Fist Flight Middle School, and Hatteras Secondary School. Programs have focused on the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and birds, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and black bears, red wolves, turtles, native and non-native plants, and biological communications and leave no trace.

The students also visit refuges to learn about plants through guided canoe trips and learn about biological communications with photo scavenger hunts. Cindy can always use more volunteers to assist her. Interested parties can contact Cindy at 252-987-1118 or Cindy_Heffley@fws.gov.

Abbey teaches 352 kindergarten students in wildlife clubs at Manteo Elementary School, Kitty Hawk Elementary School, and Nags Head Elementary School. Her sessions include a wildlife lesson and a story, a craft, and an activity to reinforce the lesson. During this school year, she has conducted lessons on otters, migratory birds, bears, alligators and the use of trees by wildlife.

Abbey will be expanding her program to first grades in September and bringing the children to the refuges. She needs volunteers to assist with planning and staffing wildlife recreation stations on the refuge. Interested parties can contact Abbey at 252-475-0060, or abbey_reibel@fws.gov.

People Profile – Cindy Heffley

The visitor services staff at Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges is comprised of Visitor Services Manager Bonnie Strawser who leads the staff, Visitor Services Specialist Abbey Reibel who coordinates volunteers and interns, visits local kindergarteners as part of her Wildlife

Club and manages the visitor center, and Cindy Heffley.

Cindy Heffley is the Visitor Services Specialist responsible for environmental education and wildlife interpretation programs. She joined the staff in May, 2008 after working at Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge on the eastern shore of Maryland and Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the coast of New Jersey. This year marks her twelfth year with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She previously spent 18 years in the security field in the private sector.

Cindy coordinates the summer programs conducted four days of the week on the two refuges, canoe and tram tours throughout the year, the Crabbing and Fishing Rodeo, Wildfest, and Dare County middle school club programs throughout the school year. She also leads programs for Wings over Water.

In her time at the refuges, she has introduced new summer programs at both refuges, developed the route and script for the general tram tour and monthly special tram tours and brought structure to the club programs at the middle schools. She's looking forward to the opening of the new visitor center in Manteo so she can help more people discover the fantastic opportunities available at the refuges.

According to Cindy, "When I was growing up, we weren't allowed inside until suppertime. I've always enjoyed the outdoors and using my creativity to have fun. I also have always loved interacting with people of all walks of life from the homeless in Philadelphia to the interesting local residents of the many small towns in which I've lived. I enjoy learning new things and sharing what I've learned using innovative methods. This position at Pea Island and Alligator River refuges combines my passion for wildlife with my passion for people. As an added bonus, the staff members are fantastic to work with!"

Cindy holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, as well as a Certification in Leadership Studies from Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas. She is a native of Pennsylvania and lives with her husband Rick in Nags Head. In her leisure time, Cindy enjoys non-fiction writing, cooking, beachcombing, and most anything to do with the outdoors.