

# Wings

Newsletter for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges

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## 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.

More information about the Society is on its web site at: <http://www.coastalwildliferefuge.com/>

## Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Officers

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

## Thank You, Volunteers

Volunteers continue to make a significant contribution to the administration of Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges. Volunteers from the local community staff the visitor center at Pea Island and maintain the refuge's visibility seven days a week. Resident volunteers staff the visitor center, perform maintenance on the refuges, and assist with education and interpretation programs.

The summer interns for 2011 arrived on May 23 and will assist with education and interpretation programs, biological monitoring, and maintenance. The interns allow the refuge to maintain a full schedule of programs during the summer.



Red Wolf Pups Born in the Spring of 2011  
(USFWS Photo)

## 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 89 wolves (69 wolves in 29 packs and 20 wolves not associated with a pack) with radio transmitters. There are 13 breeding pairs in the 29 packs. There were 46 pups born in 11 litters during the 2011 whelping season. The pups are not included in the total of 89 known wolves.



Manteo Middle School Students Documenting Findings of Scavenger Hunt at Pea Island NWR

## **Alligator River Office and Visitor Center**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service broke ground in 2010 on its 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 contractor began work on the building site at the end of May. The top foot of the sandy topsoil must be removed from the footprint of the building, parking lot, and driveway and replaced with soil that can be compacted to provide a solid base for construction. The estimated completion date for the building is February of 2012.

## **Pea Island Office, Residence, and Work Camper Pad Moving in 2012**

The Fish and Wildlife Service has decided to relocate the Pea Island office, residence, and work camper pad in 2012. The office and shop was damaged in 2010 by a storm and the structure was undermined by erosion. The staff relocated their office to the living room of the interns' residence. A recent inspection of the residence has yielded problems that cannot be corrected economically.

The staff will relocate to an office at the Bodie Island Lighthouse north of Oregon Inlet. The Fish and Wildlife Service will house the interns in a house in South Nags Head. The resident volunteers will have hookups for their recreational vehicles at the Hatteras National Seashore maintenance area in South Nags Head.

## **Climate Change Project**

The Nature Conservancy's Climate Change Adaptation Project on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge continues along Point Peter Road on the east side of U.S. Route 264 between Manns Harbor and Stumpy Point.

This spring, The Nature Conservancy continued to work on acquiring permits for additional hydrologic restoration work to the north and south of the Point Peter Road demonstration site. The staff plans to begin the work in September.

The staff and volunteers also monitored the demonstration site, looking at changes in water

quality, water flow, soil accretion and subsidence, shoreline erosion rates, oyster density, estuarine fauna species richness, and seedling growth and survival after restoration.

Volunteers from the University of North Carolina - Greensboro, the Richmond Montessori School, and Baltimore and Waldorf, Maryland bagged oyster shells in late May.

This summer, the staff and volunteers will continue to bag oyster shells. The bagging events are scheduled for June 13-16, June 21-24 and August dates to be determined. The bags will be used to establish a 100 to 150-foot reef at Point Peter.

They will monitor the demonstration site and expand the monitoring activities with the help of an intern from the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Nature Conservancy will also prepare for expansion of hydrologic restoration in late summer

Volunteers are needed to fill the bags of oyster shells. Interested parties should contact Brian Boutin at [bboutin@tnc.org](mailto: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](http://www.nature.org) and following the links to the North Carolina Chapter home page.



Great Blue Heron, a Familiar Site Throughout the Year on Coastal North Carolina Refuges (photo by Tracey Rock).

## **Fire Program**

A lightning strike started the 45,294-acre Pains Bay fire on May 7 in the southern part of the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Firefighters restricted the fire to the refuge and the Dare County Bombing Range. The fire was declared 100% contained on June 27.

At the peak of the fire-fighting effort, there were 261 personnel, 17 tractors and plows, 32 fire engines, 61 lift pumps, and four helicopters assigned to the fire. Firefighters pumped as many as 500 million gallons of water on the fire every day.

The fire is burning in dense vegetation on organic soils. The organic soils pose a significant challenge to firefighters. The muck is so deep that it will not support the weight of equipment or access to the fire is limited to established roads.

The water table in the soil is at or near the surface for most of the year. When the soil dries out, it can and does burn. The fire in 1,000 acres of the soil will burn through the summer.

U.S. Route 264 was closed to traffic for an extended period of time between Stumpy Point and Engelhard when smoke limited visibility and firefighters were staged on the highway. There was also a temporary flight restriction imposed in the air space around the fire.

Firefighters came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; National Park Service; North Carolina Division of Forest Resources; U.S. Department of Defense; Stumpy Point, Manns Harbor, Roanoke Island, and Dare County Volunteer Fire Departments; and Dare County Emergency Management Services. Personnel from 22 states had been assigned to the fire.

## **Summer Program Schedule**

The Fish and Wildlife Service has set the program schedule for the summer of 2012.

The staff has posted the schedule at:

<http://www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/Images/InterpretivePrograms.pdf>



Pains Bay Fire (USFWS Photo)

## **Summer Program Schedule (continued)**

Bird walks will be conducted at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge from May through October on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 8:00 to 9:30.

The Pea Island Canoe Tours will be held from June through September on Thursday mornings from 9 to noon. Family canoe tours designed for children will occur from June through August on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10 to noon.

The Alligator River canoe tours will be conducted from June through August on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 9 to noon.

The Pea Island schedule also features: Turtle Talk on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 3:30, Birds and Their Adaptations on Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30, and Soundside Adventure on Thursdays from 2:30 to 3:30. Turtle Talk and Birds and Their Adaptation meet at the Pea Island Visitor Center. Soundside Adventure meets at New Inlet 3 miles south of the Visitor Center.

Staff and volunteers will lead Alligator River tram tours on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8:30 to 10:30. Alligator River will host two wildlife programs on Wednesday evenings: Bear Necessities from 5:30 to 7:00 and Red Wolf Howling Safari from 7:30 to 9:00. The tram tours and wildlife programs will depart from the Creef Cut Trail Parking Lot at the intersection of Milltail Road and U.S. Route 64.

## **Pea Island Biology Report**

The peak of the spring shorebird migration season at Pea Island occurred around May 24 when an estimated 7,800 shorebirds were observed. Semipalmated sandpipers were the most frequently observed bird.

Terns, oystercatchers, and piping plovers have begun to nest on bare sandy areas at Pea Island. The refuge staff has established six exclosures around nesting areas to prevent refuge visitors from disturbing the birds.

The area just south of Oregon Inlet is a popular nesting location again this year. The state Department of Transportation excavated sand from the area before the nesting season in 2010 to provide fill material to repair washouts along North Carolina Route 12. The excavations collect water that is critical for the nestlings.

The first sea turtle nest of the season was found on Pea Island on June 3. Both loggerhead and green sea turtles nest on Pea Island. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classifies both species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

## **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 tours have continued this spring with themes for each month's tour: National Wildlife Refuge System Anniversary in March, Let's Get Outdoors Scavenger Hunt in April, and Migratory Bird Day in May.

The refuge staff and interns will conduct 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 44 visitors have taken tours during March, April, and May.

Tram tours are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday morning from 8:30 to 10:30 during the summer. The summer tours cost \$7 and reservations are required. Call 252-216-9464 to make reservations. Monthly tours on the second Saturday of the month will resume in September.

## **School Programs**

Visitor Services Specialists Cindy Heffley and Abbey Reibel have continued to take programs to local 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 Cape Hatteras Secondary School. Programs in March, April, and May have focused on Red Wolves, Native and Non-Native Plants, and Turtles.

The students also visit refuges to practice Leave No Trace principles and digital photography. Cape Hatteras Secondary School club members also participated in a canoe tour at Alligator River refuge to look for native and non-native plants. Cindy can always use more volunteers to assist her. Interested parties can contact Cindy at 252-987-1118 or [Cindy\\_Heffley@fws.gov](mailto: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. In March, April, and May, she conducted lessons on Alligator Awareness, Land and Sea Turtles, and the Wildlife Olympics.

At the end of the school year, 16 refuge staff members and volunteers hosted 120 students from the first grade classes at Manteo Elementary School at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge for a series of workshops on the refuge. The workshops taught the students about life in the Pamlico Sound by seining and identifying animals, plants and animals along the North Pond Trail with a digital camera scavenger hunt, crabbing, and observation of animals and shells on the beach. Those first grade students will attend Wildfest in October as second graders with second graders from other area schools.

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](mailto:abbey_reibel@fws.gov).

## People Profile – Pam Wingrove

Pam Wingrove is the new natural resource planner for the refuges in northeastern North Carolina. Pam's primary responsibility is to develop land protection plans and establish acquisition boundaries for each refuge in northeastern North Carolina.

The Fish and Wildlife Service requires that each refuge have an acquisition boundary before land can be added to the refuge through acquisition of either fee simple interest or a conservation easement. Most of the refuges in northeastern North Carolina were established before that requirement existed and do not have an acquisition boundary beyond the refuge ownership.

Pam has experience as a program specialist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. During her time with NOAA, she served on a detail to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and was the Head of the Designation Team for the Northwest Straits National Marine Sanctuary.

Pam has also been an extension agent with Florida Sea Grant Program in the Florida Keys and Manager of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Alabama. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Science from Auburn University and a Master of Science degree in Marine Science from the University of South Alabama.



Refuge Intern Brice Sweeney Assisting a Manteo Elementary School Student Catch a Crab

## 2011 Summer Interns

The summer interns for 2011 arrived on May 23 and will assist with education and interpretation programs, biological monitoring, and maintenance. The interns allow the refuge to maintain a full schedule of programs during the summer.

This year's group brings a diverse array of backgrounds to the refuges.

Brice Sweeney is a resident of Chesapeake, Virginia and a Forestry and Wildlife major at Virginia Tech. He has previously interned at the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach, Virginia and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in Homer, Alaska.

Amy Etherington is from Versailles, Kentucky in central Kentucky. She graduated from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Kentucky with a degree in biology. Her favorite courses in college were Ornithology and Ichthyology. Amy loves running, especially on the beach.

Megan Strine's home is Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and she is a junior at California University of Pennsylvania where she is majoring in Wildlife and Fisheries. She enjoys volunteering at a farm near her home or finding new places to hike and kayak.

Brenden Garrett hails from Mont Belvieu, Texas near Baytown, which is about 40 miles east of Houston. He attended Lee College in Baytown and then attended Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, an excellent forestry college. One of Brendan's main interests is wildlife, mainly bears.

Mike Dreibelbis has grown up near State College, Pennsylvania and is a senior at the Pennsylvania State University at University Park majoring in recreation, parks, and tourism management with an emphasis on outdoor recreation. He is an assistant scoutmaster for his local Boy Scout troop of which he was a member as a youth. Mike enjoys being in the outdoors and sharing that passion with others.

## Crabbing and Fishing Rodeo

The Fish and Wildlife Service celebrated National Fishing and Boating Week with its Annual Crabbing and Fishing Rodeo at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, June 11 from 9AM to noon. A total of 75 youth and their families caught hundreds of crabs. Prizes were distributed to all participants. Local merchants donated the prizes.

## Nature Play

Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges hosted a three-week training workshop for 15 Nature Play interns between June 6 and 24. Nature Play is a movement to connect children with nature through nature-based play.

The workshop was held by the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Learning Initiative at North Carolina State University, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The volunteer interns spent the three weeks on the wildlife refuges learning to be playworkers, including designing and managing natural play and learning environments, developing pilot “play animation” programs, delivering them to visiting children and families, and learning how creative outdoor play can connect kids to the natural world.

The program included developing recommendations on how to expand this pilot project to other parks and nature centers as well as designing a future installation near the Refuge Visitor Center. Interns were trained in playwork methods, engaging in teams to design, manage, and deliver nature-based play programs in two events for children and families visiting the refuge.



Virginia Iris Blooming in May along the Ditches at Alligator River NWR (Cindy Heffley Photo)

## Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Receives Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society received the Regional Director’s Honor Award as Friends Group of the Year from the Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on May 10 at a ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Society was cited for taking on several new projects last year while providing support for all facets of Visitor Services programs. When the Service needed science support to undergird its position on the controversial Bonner Bridge Replacement Project, the Society contracted with Dr. Robert Dolan of the University of Virginia to complete an \$80,000 research project to analyze the data that had been collected since the terminal groin was constructed in 1989. Due to the fast action of the Society, the project was accomplished in record time.

The Society, which focuses on connecting children with nature, offered \$20,000 in transportation grants to bring classes to eastern North Carolina refuges. With the Society’s support, 650 students participate in monthly wildlife clubs. Nearly 800 additional children participated in the Wildlife Olympics.

The Society also provided support for the new tram for interpretive tours on Alligator River. The Society’s consistent advocacy for the North Carolina Gateway Visitor Center and Headquarters culminated in the project’s funding in 2010.



President Stanly Oliver, Regional Director Cindy Dohner, and Volunteer Coordinator Abbey Reibel (USFWS photo)