

Wings

Volume XVI, No. 3

October, 2013



Volunteer Helpers needed to help remove barbed wire from US 64 on Alligator River October 7- 9, 2013
For more info: tracey_rock@fws.gov

This edition of "Wings" highlights our wonderful volunteers. As noted in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Annual Friends and Volunteer Report, "Volunteers of all ages and abilities now provide a wide array of vital services on Service lands. Working side by side with Service staff, they greet the public and teach the young; they clear trails and control invasive species; and they provide biological expertise with precision and enthusiasm. If a job needs to be done, chances are pretty good that a volunteer is there to help. The Service could not function without the 1.7 million hours of work that our more than 46,000 volunteers contribute every year." Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges rely on volunteers in every program area, and the staff appreciates each hour volunteers contribute. After reading the articles in this edition of "Wings," you too may see a place to give of yourself. Please contact Tracey Rock at tracey_rock@fws.gov or 252-473-1132 x227 or other staff members listed for more information.

Project Help Needed!

Have you always wanted to be a refuge volunteer, but lived too far away? Or, are you a refuge volunteer dreading the coming colder weather that may impact your ability to come out and help?? We may have just the project for you!

Within a year, all refuges in the entire nation will have new web pages that will be managed via a "Content Management System" or CMS. Visitor Services staff at Alligator River and Pea Island Refuges provides support for all the national wildlife refuges in North Carolina, when needed. This is one of those times where that support is needed. We have ten refuges that will have new web pages!

So, where do you come in? Most of the information needed for the new CMS pages is already available on the current refuge web pages. We need people to "adopt" a refuge and commit to reading through the current web pages to complete a form with very specific directions, like "Describe wildlife observation opportunities on this refuge." If you cannot find info for any of the questions, just leave them blank.

These rough draft forms would save the managers and other staff hours of time in completing the forms, and you may learn a few new things about refuges in the process! We also will need lots of photos to illustrate the new pages!

Interested? Contact Bonnie Strawser at bonnie_strawser@fws.gov or 252-423-0815.

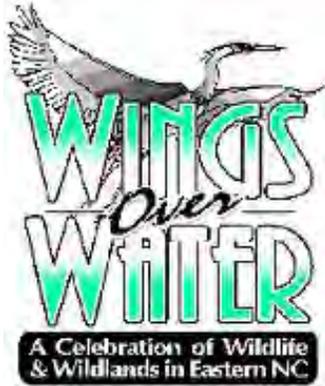
URGENT NEED: We are in the process of upgrading the Nags Head Bunk House and need 1-3 sets of sturdy bunk beds. If you have a set to donate or sell at "yard sale prices," contact Tracey Rock (information above). Donations are fully tax deductible.

Contribute to this Newsletter!

If you have a refuge experience you'd like to share, consider contributing an article to one of our quarterly newsletters! Send to cindy_heffley@fws.gov.

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Did you know?

- This year, participants in Wings Over Water are arriving from at least 20 states and Canada!
- Of the 101 trips available, 15 are already sold-out!
- Keynote speaker Greg Miller is also giving classroom programs!

Volunteers for Wings Over Water

Most people may not realize that the majority of the leaders for Wings Over Water trips volunteer their time each year! Whether it's a bird walk, paddling tour, or natural history program, these dedicated leaders anxiously await the next group of participants for their trips.

Many of the leaders have been with the event from the beginning while some have joined us in recent years. All of the leaders have one thing in common and that is enthusiasm and passion for the natural and historical resources in our area.

If you are a participant in Wings Over Water this year, know that your trip might not have been possible if it were not for these committed volunteers!

Submitted by Cindy Heffley

Art "Takes Wing" at the NC Aquarium on RI

While you are here participating in Wings Over Water, be sure to check out the Wild Wings Over North Carolina exhibition at The North Carolina Aquarium. From Red Bellied Woodpeckers and Blue Jays to Tundra Swan and Turkey Vultures, the Carolinas Chapter of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators celebrates the beauty and wonder of wild birds through this exhibition created especially for the NC Aquariums. The Guild is a nonprofit organization founded at the Smithsonian Institution in 1968 to promote the field of naturalist illustration. It now has several chapters in the United States and hundreds of members around the world. The Carolinas Chapter is made up of over 30 illustrators throughout the Carolinas. Its home base is the NC Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill. GNSI-Carolinas encourages member education by hosting bimonthly meetings where members share portfolios and participate in mini-workshops and demonstrations. It also helps promote public awareness and understanding of scientific illustration by producing several group exhibitions each year.



K. Dough



E. Skurnick

The North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island will host the exhibition October through December 2013 and its sister facility at Pine Knoll Shores will host it January through March 2014. The North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island, adjacent to the Manteo Regional Airport, is open 9 am to 5 pm every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Wild Wings Over North Carolina is included with regular Aquarium admission.



B. Donovan



G. Minnich



Ann Runyon

Volunteers in Maintenance

There are many ways to volunteer at Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges.

Group clean-ups are one popular opportunity and these take place several times a year. Pea Island beach and roadside trash pick-up is just one example of a valuable way to assist in the maintenance of our beautiful beaches and barrier island.

North Carolina State University Alumni make a yearly trek to the Outer Banks to participate in a group workforce, picking up trash and debris from the seashore and roadside of Highway 12 between Oregon Inlet and Rodanthe.



Recently, the Venture Crew, a branch of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America focusing on the teaching of leadership skills from Midlothian (VA), traveled to Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and worked to remove trash from the beaches and parking lots along NC Highway 12.

These group efforts are extremely valuable and are appreciated by the Refuge in helping to maintain this priceless natural resource and in keeping the areas clean, safe, and beautiful for all who live and travel here.

Submitted by Tracey Rock

Intern Update



We welcome Kathryn Wesson who is a senior geography major at Virginia Tech, and will be taking this coming fall semester off to intern at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. According to Kathryn, "Growing up in Virginia, I enjoy hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains and I hope to someday through-hike the Appalachian Trail. I look forward to working in North Carolina, gaining new skills in wildlife management and education, and pursuing a future career in environmental conservation that will allow me to work outdoors." Kathryn will be staying with us through Wings Over Water.



Volunteers in the Natural Resource Program

Enjoying Fall Colors on the Refuges



Beautyberry

Visitors usually come to national wildlife refuges in the fall to observe waterfowl stopping over before they complete their migration south or settling in for the winter season. They also watch bear, deer, and turkeys foraging through crop fields gleaning the grain that the farmers have left in the field.

The plants on the refuges offer attractions that are not dependent on the migratory patterns of waterfowl or daily routines of other wildlife species. At Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, the first frost does not usually occur until late November or early December and there are late-flowering goldenrods, asters, and native sunflowers blooming and attracting bees and butterflies until at least Thanksgiving. The tall stalks of yellow goldenrod flowers line refuge roadsides. The small white and lavender aster blooms occur throughout the refuges. Narrow leaf sunflower is common in wetland areas, and goldfinches harvest the seed as soon as it matures.

The leaves of the grasses, sedges, rushes, and bulrushes in the extensive marshes and uplands of both refuges turn golden brown as their seeds mature and the plants go dormant for the winter. The seed heads themselves are attractive ornaments on the landscape ranging from the fluffy tufts of woolgrass seeds to sparsely branched heads of sawgrass and sugarcane plumegrass.

The refuges are occupied by a wide variety of evergreen species that provide an excellent background for the colorful leaves of the other deciduous plants.

Alligator River's forests feature swamp tupelo and red maple trees. The leaves of the tupelo turn a rich purple hue as its upland relative black gum does. Red maple foliage ranges from yellow to bright red and provides a sharp contrast to other colors in the forest.

The most colorful plants are not necessarily the best known or loved. Winged sumac turns a classic orange color and may have the most attractive foliage on the refuges. Beautyberry and poison ivy have bright yellow leaves; beautyberry also has purple berries. Blueberry shrubs color the understory of the forests red with their small egg-shaped leaves. The fruit of winged sumac, beautyberry, and poison ivy persist throughout the winter and provide a welcome meal for birds migrating back north in the late winter.

Many of those evergreen shrubs add to the refuge color pallet with red berries on hollies, lavender seeds on wax myrtle, and purple fruit on red bay.

As you visit the refuges to peek at the wildlife, keep your eyes open and take in the plants that provide them their food and cover.

Submitted by CWRS Secretary and Refuge Volunteer Bob Glennon

Photos by Bob Glennon



Goldenrod



Sugarcane Plumegrass

Volunteers in the Natural Resource Program

In August 2010, my wife, Kathy, and I became refuge volunteers for the Turtle Watch program on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Unattended, turtle hatchlings have a very low survival rate due to having to cross the open beach, make their way through the surf, and then swim 3-5 miles to the relative safety of the Gulf Stream kelp beds. To give the hatchlings a bit of a head start on survival, we sit and wait for the loggerhead or green sea turtles to hatch and provide them with a runway (using garden edging) to the water's edge. The runway keeps them from straying and provides them with protection from being ghost crabs' dinner.

In the photo, a predator guard is over the nest for protection while waiting for the turtles to hatch; once a sufficient number have hatched, we open the guard door and use the white bucket as a target to get the turtles headed for the runway (they seek the light of the moon for direction and the white bucket stimulates that response). As the turtles go down the runway towards the ocean, we count them for refuge data purposes on the number of hatchlings.

Each evening, volunteers sit at the nests from an hour before sunset to midnight as most turtles hatch during



these hours. This year there are an almost-record 37 nests on Pea Island.

Wednesday night is our volunteer night. This year, we will sit with the nests from late July (very hot) through late October (a little nippy). We have escorted as few as one hatchling in an evening to as many as 83 hatchlings from one nest. At times, multiple nests will have hatchlings emerge in an evening. On the other hand, we have had any number of evenings where there was no activity at all. Generally, the hatchlings will work their own way through the surf to begin their long swim. On occasion the surf has been so high that we gathered the hatchlings in the white

bucket after their trek down the runway. Then we waded out hip-deep to release them so the surf would not dump them all back on the beach. We are unable to provide a photo of the hatchlings as their eyes are sensitive to the light, and if flash were used they would become disoriented. If moonlight is not sufficient for lighting after the turtles hatch, we use red-lensed flashlights.

Turtle Watch is a great experience, and we both look forward to continuing to be Pea Island Turtle Watchers.

Submitted by Volunteer Chuck

Turtle Program Update

As of September 23, there were 37 sea turtle nests on Pea Island. Nests 1-22 have hatched. Of the 37 nests, 35 were Loggerheads and 2 were Green Sea Turtles. We thank all of our dedicated volunteers who are involved with the Turtle Patrol and Turtle Watch.



Photos by Volunteer Jackie Orsucak

Volunteers in Environmental Education and Outreach

Occasionally, the wild animals and birds leave Alligator River and Pea Island National Refuge and visit children who might never see them in their natural habitat.

Kindergarten teacher, Caroline Carpenter, invited two grandparents who are Refuge Volunteers and members of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society to visit Jesse Wharton Elementary School in Greensboro, NC, to discuss Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges with kindergarten classes. The animals and birds arrived in the form of photos, mounted animals, and the endangered red wolf in character costume.



Students watched and listened to a slide presentation and learned about the National Wildlife Refuge System. Students viewed photos of refuge animals in their natural habitat. Questions and answers followed.

The highlight of the visit for the grandparents was seeing the awestruck students. Many touched a black bear mount, probably for the first time ever. The unexpected visit from the endangered red wolf in character costume sparked excitement in the eyes and emotions of the students.

Submitted by Volunteers Stanley and Paula Oliver (pictured here, as the red wolf!)

Environmental Education and Outreach Volunteer Opportunities

The refuge will be involved in many off-site events this fall! We need HELP!! Duties include helping children with coloring, distributing refuge information, and interacting with event participants. Even if you can donate an hour or two, your help is greatly appreciated. We need help at the following events:

- Wildfest at the Wright Brothers Pavilion - Wednesday, October 16 from 9 am - 2 pm.
- Outer Banks Seafood Festival at Windmill Point in Nags Head - Saturday, October 19
- Trick or Treat Under the Sea at the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island - Tuesday and Wednesday October 29-30

New Education Committee Forming

With the overwhelming success of the new Visitor Center on Roanoke Island, we will be developing new programs for the summer of 2014. To allow more interested volunteers a chance to participate in planning these programs, an online committee is being established. This group will meet mostly via email. This is a great way to help the refuge even if you can't physically visit us!

Please contact Cindy Heffley at cindy_heffley@fws.gov or 252-475-4180 if you would like to help out with events or education planning.

Educators interested in planning a field trip to Pea Island or Alligator River Refuges, or the National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center should contact Cindy Heffley (see above).

Volunteers in the Red Wolf Recovery Program

General refuge intern Kate Hankins has moved over to the Red Wolf Recovery Program as the fall caretaker.

Kate graduated in 2012 from UNC-Chapel Hill with a BS in Biology. Since then, she has worked in different internship programs to gain experience and figure out what she wants to do next professionally. Her goal is to be involved in animal care and research of terrestrial carnivores such as wolves and big cats. Her main research interest is studying social communication within groups of animals. Kate has a wide range of research experience with various species, including sea turtles in North Carolina and Florida, and sulfur butterflies in the Colorado



Rockies. She also studied abroad in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands two years ago and got to put her scuba certification to good use.

We're lucky to have Kate as she enjoys the challenges of new experiences and is an incredibly dedicated worker. She looks forward to learning more about red wolves, gaining additional animal care experience, and assisting with the efforts of the Red Wolf Recovery Program.

Applications are being accepted for future red wolf internship positions.

Contributed by Becky Bartel, Red Wolf Recovery Program

2013 Foster Pup!

A female red wolf pup was born in late April this year at the Sandy Ridge captive site, the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan facility on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. She was the sole survivor of her litter. This presented a good opportunity to foster her into a wild litter of similar age. Fostering pups from a captive litter to a wild litter has been a successful tool used by the Red Wolf Recovery Program as a means to increase the numbers of wild red wolves and enhance the genetic diversity of the wild population. In this case, there were two female pups already present in the wild litter, and all the pups were between 9 -11 days old. Once the new foster pup was covered with the scent (urine) of the other pups in the litter, all three pups were placed back into the den. We'll keep you posted on their progress!



The new pack! Photo credit: USFWS/B. Bartel

FREE Red Wolf Howlings will be held on the following Saturdays:

- October 12 - Wolf Awareness Week - 6:00-7:30 pm
- November 16 - Full Moon Howl - 5:00-6:30 pm
- December 7 - Holiday Howl - 5:00-6:30 pm

Visit www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/spec.html for more information.

Track the Pack at: <http://trackthepack.blogspot.com>



**Enjoy Your Visit...
Inside & Outside!**



*"The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering: Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good."
Ivan Scheier*

The Visitor Center is great place to relax, have some fun, and enjoy what is right outside your back door! Bring your family—bring your friends and explore the exhibits inside and our nature trail outside. We even have a picnic table, so bring your lunch too!!

What's new at the store?





Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society News

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.

The Coastal Wildlife Refuges Society is always looking for those who want to help.

You may support the refuges by donating to the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society. Every contribution helps; it could be \$20.00, \$50.00, \$100.000 or any amount.

Click on this web link to make your donation <https://www.outer-banks.com/coastalwildlife/form.cfm>

Or, you may mail a donation check to:

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society
P.O. Box 1808
Manteo, NC 27954

Or call us with your credit card information: 252-216-9464

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



Narrowleaf Sunflower



Goldenrod



Red Maple

Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges
P O Box 1969 (mailing)
100 Conservation Way (physical)
Manteo, NC 27954
252.473.1131
Fax: 252.473.1668
E-mail: alligatorriver@fws.gov
www.fws.gov/alligatorriver

Follow us on Facebook:
**Friends of Alligator River and Pea Island
National Wildlife Refuges**

USFWS North Carolina (NEW!)



The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Looking Ahead (October—December 2013)

[Pea Island Refuge Programs](#)

Free Programs-No reservations required:

Guided bird walks:

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays in October (except October 23-25)

Thursdays and Fridays in November

Fridays in December

8 am (Meet at the Visitor Center)

[Alligator River Refuge Programs](#)

Free Programs-No reservations required:

October 12 - Wolf Awareness Week - 6 - 7:30 pm

November 16 - Full Moon Howl - 5 - 6:30 pm

December 7 - Holiday Howl - 5 - 6:30 pm

Program requiring reservations/fee to guarantee a spot (Call: 252-216-9464)

Tram Tours October 12, November 9, December 14, 9 am - Noon; \$7 per person/12 and under Free (Meet at the Creef Cut Trail Parking Lot)

[National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center Preschool Junior Naturalist Program](#)

Fridays Year-round 9:30-10:30 am Contact Cindy at 252-475-4180 for more information.