

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 1969
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

Contact: Bonnie Strawser - 252-473-1131



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News Release

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Author to present 2008 Wings Over Water keynote address

Don't miss the annual Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival, Nov. 4-9, when all things wild are celebrated on the Outer Banks through events ranging from paddling to birding, history to art, and photography to red wolves.

And this six-day event is held when off season rental rates are in and heavy traffic is out.

This year's keynote speaker will be birder and author, Pete Dunne, who also will lead two programs.

When he was seven years old, Dunne, now 56, was presented with two instruments that would define his life. One was a pair of binoculars; the other a book -- a book about birds. One brought intimacy; the other understanding and through them the woodlands behind his suburban home became a portal that opened onto a world of discovery and wonders.

Dunne, vice president of the New Jersey Audubon Society and director of the Society's Cape May Bird Observatory, uses his talents and energy to make the natural world real for others. The author of *The Wind Masters*, *Hawks in Flight*, *The Feather Quest*, Dunne's *Essential Field Guide Companion*, he also has written regular columns in birding magazines, as well as the "New Jersey Sunday Section" of the *New York Times*. In his writing and frequent speaking engagements around the world, he weaves information, insight and even fantasy into a net that captures minds and hearts.

A field birder with an international reputation, he has served on the board of the American Birding Association and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. An authority on the optical needs of birders, he

has served as a marketing and product advisor to Nikon, Zeiss, Leica, Leupold, Swarovski Optik, Swift Instruments, Bausch and Lomb, and other companies.

As involved as he is with New Jersey Audubon's outreach and programming, Dunne makes time to lead an every Monday morning bird walk and, in season, to assist with the Cape May Hawk Count -- the count he established 31 years ago.

"It keeps me grounded in what is real and what is important," he explains.

He also is the founder of and a 24-year veteran of the World Series of Birding. Called "The World's Greatest Natural Treasure Hunt," the annual event attracts more than 100 teams and raises more than half a million dollars for conservation every year.

In recognition of this event, and for life time achievement promoting the cause of birding, Dunne was awarded the American Birding Association's Roger Tory Peterson Award in 2001. Other awards include the EPA Environmental Protection Award, Governor's Conference on Tourism Environmental Award and the 1991 Winchester Good News Hunting Writer's Contest first prize.

When not working, writing, traveling or birding, Dunne spends his time with wife Linda and the couple's volatile pair of Labrador retrievers, Max and Raven, in the riverside village of Mauricetown.

His keynote program -- "Twenty-five Things That Changed Birding" -- will be a reflection upon some great and small institutions, ideas, products, initiatives, and byproducts that changed the face of birding, making it the avocation it is today. Some are obvious. Some will surprise you. All will make you think and ponder about the past, present and future of this hobby enjoyed by millions.

The Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival keynote dinner will be at 6 p.m., Friday, Nov. 7, at Roanoke Island Festival Park. Cost is \$30 and advanced registration is required.

Participants are encouraged to register soon as most programs have limits on number of registrants. And those traveling to the area also should book accommodations early to ensure that lodging can be found in convenient areas.

Call the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce to receive a copy of OBX Wild which includes a complete listing of program offerings. The book also is available at area visitor centers, businesses and in downloadable form on the official website at www.wingsoverwater.org.

Call the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce at 252-441-8144 or go to www.outerbankschamber.com.