
NEMOURS GAZETTE

A publication of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, South Carolina 29945 · 843-846-2539

www.nemourswildlifefoundation.org

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FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA: *Shared conservation concerns*

by Ernie Wiggers

Members of the ACE Basin Task Force welcomed colleagues from the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) for a visit and tour of the ACE Basin in mid-March. The purpose of the visit was to exchange ideas and share how each group has been successful in achieving land conservation across very different landscapes and land ownership patterns. Sandwiched in between a wonderful Frogmore stew dinner on Monday evening and a lunch of fried chicken and collards the following day at Nemours Plantation there was ample opportunity for each group to share their thoughts on past successes and future challenges ahead in land conservation.

Founded in 1974, the SAHC is one of the country's oldest land trusts. Their mission is to conserve the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, local farmland, and scenic beauty of the mountains of North Carolina and east Tennessee. Their focus area is literally the top of the world for the southeastern U.S. and covers a section of the Appalachian Hiking Trail and such critical landscape as the grassy balds of the Roan Highlands. These are some of the most picturesque landscapes in the world and have a very rich and unique botanical diversity.

The efforts of SAHC have led to the protection of some 60,000 acres, but much more has to be done according to their Executive Director Carl Silverstein. One of their recent success stories which was 40 years in the making is the protection of the 601-acre tract at Grassy Ridge in Avery County, NC, adjacent to the Pisgah National Forest and



Members of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy observe a rice trunk used to regulate water in tidal impoundments

near the Appalachian Trail in the Highlands of Roan. This tract borders one of the highest ridges of the Southern Appalachians and has been one of SAHC's top conservation priorities for four decades. The property forms a high elevation corridor, linking National Forest lands on the north end with lands owned by the State of North Carolina in the Yellow Mountain State Natural Area to the south. This is truly a crown jewel of the Roan Highlands.

One member of the SAHC group was Jay Leutze, familiar to many as the author of an inspirational book titled [Stand Up That Mountain](#) that told the true story of the fight by local citizens to protect their mountain and way of life. The book is about a group of "mountain people" suspicious that a mining company was about to destroy the mountain above their homes and they call upon their neighbor Jay Leutze, a non-practicing attorney, to help them in their fight. The book is a great story about what is possible when local people come together to protect their land and heritage.

For all participants, the visit by SAHC members was a chance to learn how conservation efforts are being done in other ecosystems by very talented individuals and reaffirm the importance of everyone's efforts to conserve our land and protect our local heritage. It is always comforting to know we are not alone in our efforts in the ACE Basin and others have noticed our accomplishments.

Many thanks go out to Witt Langstaff, Jr. of SAHC and Al Segars, SC DNR biologist, for organizing the event and han-

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A FINE DAY FOR OYSTERS

The weather forecast called for afternoon thunderstorms, but Sunday, April 28th turned out to be the perfect day for an oyster roast at Nemours Plantation. Nearly fifty Friends of Nemours and guests joined Nemours staff and students to enjoy many bushels of oysters some guests called “the best I’ve eaten all year”. Another southern delicacy, chicken and sausage perleau, prepared by Daniel Barrineau, Robert Kitler, Ray Bass and Justin Rickenbaker, added additional flare to the menu.

Oyster roast attendees were startled to find a real honest-to-goodness full-size rice trunk on display outside the classroom. The rice trunk, built by the aforementioned, Kitler, Rickenbaker, Barrineau, Bass and others, was slated to be delivered a few days later to the Bear Island Wildlife Management Area in Colleton County. Anyone who has toured Nemours Plantation knows there are numerous rice trunks located on dikes throughout the property that are used to regulate water levels in remnant rice fields, now called impoundments, to provide appropriate habitat and food sources for both migrating and indigenous wildlife.

The hallmark of Nemours Wildlife Foundation’s work is scientific research aimed at expanding knowledge of wildlife and habitat in the ACE Basin. Graduate students and interns from colleges and universities including Clemson, University of South Carolina, Mississippi State University and the University of Vermont are currently engaged in studies of mottled ducks, wild turkeys, and amphibians in and around Nemours Plantation. Guests at the oyster roast had an opportunity to engage with the students to learn more about their research and their future plans for careers in wildlife and conservation fields. It is this work which is supported by memberships in the Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation and it was evident that guests were impressed with the scientific investigations



Friends of Nemours inspect a newly-built rice trunk on display at the oyster roast

funded by their annual donations.

Special thanks to Mike and Gigi McShane for their significant contribution to the success of the first annual Friends of Nemours spring oyster roast. In a complete departure from the usual content of Nemours Wildlife Foundation’s newsletter and just in time for summer picnics, we are printing the recipe for Gigi duPont McShane’s wonderful cole slaw which received rave notices.

GIGI’S FABULOUS SUNFLOWER COLE SLAW

1 lb. ready-to-eat cole slaw mix
1 cup sunflower seeds - toasted
1 cup slivered almonds - toasted
1 bunch green onions, chopped
2 pkgs. beef ramen noodles

DRESSING

1 cup olive oil for salads
1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup white vinegar
2 pkgs. seasoning mix from ramen noodles

Toast almonds and sunflower seeds in oven until golden brown.

Crush up 2 pkgs of ramen noodles and set aside.

Place oil, vinegar, sugar and seasoning packages in a jar. Mix well.

Place slaw and onions in a large plastic container with lid. Just before serving, shake the dressing well, pour over slaw mix, add noodles and nut mixture and enjoy!

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

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dling the logistics, and to Dean Harrigal, SC DNR biologist, for hosting the SAHC members at the Donnelley WMA and providing a very entertaining presentation on the history and key events associated with the ACE Basin project. Thanks also to Patty Kennedy, Beaufort Open Land Trust, and Mark Purcell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for participating and providing valuable input. A final thank you to Eddie Mills for providing a tour of Nemours Plantation. The group continued their discussions and wrapped up their visit over a wonderful lunch at Nemours Plantation prepared by Peachie Washington.

IT'S TOUGH TO BE A TURKEY RESEARCHER

by Kay Merrill



Beau Bauer (L) and Eddie Mills remove a captured turkey from the net

Before joining the Nemours staff a few years ago, I never gave much thought (well, *any* thought, to be honest) about how scientists go about gathering data on various topics. Over the last few years, I've listened in fascination as Nemours' biologists and students have talked about their experiences. As I've said many times, I've learned things I never even knew I wanted to know!

The current wild turkey study is a good example. Funded by the Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation and the Ceres Foundation, Nemours senior biologist Eddie Mills and intern Beau Bauer, a recent graduate of Clemson University, have spent the last few months pitting their skills against the wiles of wild turkeys on and around Nemours Plantation. Now, it's important to know that there's some real talent involved here. Eddie Mills has an M.S. in wildlife biology and has been working in the field for more than a dozen years. He's got plenty of experience. Beau Bauer, following two tours in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps, went back to college and graduated from Clemson last December with a degree in wildlife and fisheries biology. Need we say more about *his* experience?

So, here we have two very talented outdoorsmen, both with plenty of wildlife biology background, on the trail of a bunch of wild turkey hens. Judging by their faces and their overall condition as they've come in from the field, things haven't always gone as planned. Let's hear from Eddie and Beau about their research and their adventures:

Q – What's this turkey study all about?

Eddie: The main thing is that a state brood survey which looks at nest success (post-hatch) over the last few years has shown a decline in nest success. Typically you'd hope to see groups of multiple hens with many poults, maybe 8-10 each. But that hasn't always been the case. So we're looking at what kinds of things (habitat selection and others) lead to success, comparing all the variables and possibly determining reasons for decline in nest success. Then we can come up with management recommendations that may reverse the decline.

Q – Why are the two of you even interested in this?

Eddie: The turkey has always been a favorite of mine - hearing them in the spring, for example. They may be considered goofy by some, but they're pretty noble birds. After all, Ben Franklin

wanted them for the national bird.

Beau: I think it's interesting how such a large bird navigates thickly vegetated areas without making a sound. This is my first introduction to this kind of field work and this study is all encompassing: tracking, radio telemetry, capture/banding and marking.

Q – Talk a bit about the process.

Eddie: It takes a lot of patience. The one thing that surprises me is that they are really hard to pattern. We have to catch them with netting which is an adventure in itself. We put out bait and use game cameras to find out if they're coming to the right spot, then we sit in a blind for a few days at that spot - and they decide to go to a different area. Then once they come, they have to be standing in a particular spot, all facing in the same direction, for the netting capture to be successful. And they all need to be hens.

Beau: The birds are always on the move but the netting process is entirely static. That's problematic. You can't pursue them, you've got to wait for them to come to you. And wait, and wait.



Beau Bauer (L), Eddie Mills (center) and Justin Rickenbaker attach a radio transmitter to a captured turkey hen

Q – What's been the hardest part?

Beau: For me, it's been sitting in the blind at the net sites waiting on the turkeys. It's like being confined to isolation. I had no idea how cold and wet I was going to be in January in the Lowcountry. You see and hear things and think you're going to be surrounded by turkeys but it's just doves and crows. Sitting in a blind is a test of mental endurance.

Eddie: Me, too; sitting in the blind when there's absolutely nothing happening for 11-12 hours a day. At first I caught up on my reading, but even that gets old after a while. I've never worn more layers of clothing for more days in a row in all the years I've been here, then knowing when you finally decide to leave, they're going to come in and start feeding on the corn as soon as you've left. It's definitely mentally taxing.

So, let's fast-forward to a successful capture.

Eddie: It goes from sitting still to having 15-20 turkeys in a net that you need to remove safely and quickly. You're texting for back-up and the turkeys are squawking until we can calm them down. It's barely controlled chaos. It's all hands on deck; all the staff converges quickly to help. We put each turkey in a box provided by the National Wild Turkey Federation specifically designed for this purpose.

Once they're all in a box, you take a deep breath, take each one out, weigh, band, put on a radio transmitter backpack. It takes about 15 minutes to get them all out of the net and into boxes. To work up one bird takes about 10 minutes. And then the birds can be released. There's a huge sense of relief and euphoria once the birds are released.

Q – What's next?

Beau: The telemetry process begins, tracking the birds and their movements. What we're looking for is for the flocks to start breaking up (this is during mating season). Once we have an idea that a hen is staying in the same spot, that's an indicator that she's starting to nest. We've had a lot of birds that have been in the same spot for a week or two, then suddenly they move.

Eddie: Things seem to be a little later this year so we think we might still find some nests. All the birds except for a couple have left the property. We have access to some of the new locations but not all. We have some birds that have travelled more than 4 miles from the capture site. And they're spending time in places you would not think they would. Predation and poaching have impacted the number of birds we can collect data on. We're currently tracking 7 birds. Three of the original birds were killed and

buried, we think by a bobcat.

Beau: They were buried so completely that we had trouble recovering the carcasses. It was pretty impressive camouflage.

Eddie: Over the next couple of months we hope to be doing an analysis of vegetation around nests that were both successful and not successful, and hopefully following hens to see where they take their young to raise.

Q: What has surprised you?

Beau: I'm impressed by their long movements; some of them are really travelling.

Eddie: The amount of time they will spend in close proximity to houses surprises me, and they're in places you wouldn't think they would be.

Q: Now what?

Eddie: By the end of this year, towards fall, we hope to have preliminary findings. It will take at least another year of tracking data before we have publishable material. In the meantime, we will continue to track and record data on a daily basis.

SPRING 2013 SHOREBIRD SURVEY

by Eddie Mills

Recent data have indicated that many species of shorebirds are in steep decline. Many of these species are long distance migrants traveling from southern South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic each spring. These species with their long twice yearly flights are considered indicators of habitat health and broader biodiversity issues by many researchers. As part of the overall shorebird conservation effort to address these declines, the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, a group of collaborating State, Federal, and private conservation groups, has an initiative to expand the number of shorebird surveys conducted along the Atlantic Coast during the spring and fall migrations. The SCDNR along with Nemours Wildlife Foundation and other concerned groups are working to add shorebird survey routes in the ACE Basin. These surveys will be a part of the International Shorebird Survey (ISS) originally launched by Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences.

Nemours has implemented ISS protocols to survey managed tidal impoundments on the plantation for shorebirds during the spring and fall migrations. With the expert assistance of Dr. Chris Marsh, Executive Director of The Lowcountry Institute, Nemours staff and interns are honing their skills at identifying and counting this challenging group of birds. The first 2 surveys this spring have produced a diverse group of species using the wetlands on Nemours. Not only will these surveys help to illustrate the importance of properly managed impoundments as stopovers for migrating shorebirds but they will also provide reliable data for the ISS and be entered into Manomet's recently standardized online recording system. This information will be made available to researchers and the broader conservation community to assist in implementing recovery efforts for this important group of species.



Photo by Pamela Corwin

SHOREBIRD SURVEY RESULTS, APRIL-MAY 2013, Nemours Plantation, Beaufort County, SC

Species	# observed
Black-bellied Plover	9
Black-necked Stilt	141
Dunlin	549
Greater Yellowlegs	70
Lesser Yellowlegs	511
Killdeer	5
Long-billed Dowitcher	109
Short-billed Dowitcher	149
Least Sandpiper	259
Pectoral Sandpiper	2
Semipalmated Plover	100
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1074
Solitary Sandpiper	1
Stilt Sandpiper	56
Western Sandpiper	17
Wilson's Snipe	6
White-rumped Sandpiper	5

NEWS AND NOTES

MANY THANKS

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is very pleased to acknowledge two recent grants: A \$7,000 award from the **Beaufort Fund of the Coastal Community Foundation** will support Nemours' educational programming by providing for the purchase of 24 sets of binoculars for use by visiting groups and will also allow for the purchase of a variety of materials to enhance the educational experience for both school children and adults as they learn about their responsibility for wildlife and habitat conservation in their own corner of the South Carolina Lowcountry. A \$3,000 grant from the Charleston-based **Ceres Foundation** will help to fund intern/ Clemson graduate Beau Bauer in a Nemours Wildlife Foundation study of wild turkeys. Many thanks to both these organizations for their very welcome support!

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

At its meeting in February, the Board of Directors welcomed two new members. Bill Lortz, a resident of Brays Island, and Lane Morrison of Rose Hill Plantation in Yemassee, both long-term Friends and supporters of Nemours Wildlife Foundation, joined the Board. At the same meeting, the Board thanked retiring members Pat F. McGarity and Martha Lynn Webb for their years of service and dedication to the mission of Nemours Wildlife Foundation.

The newly comprised Board, along with former members, spent a day in late February reviewing the first 17 years in the life of Nemours Wildlife Foundation and began to lay groundwork for the future. The vision and mission found on the back page of this newsletter is one result of the planning session. As further developments occur, we will keep you apprised.

A WELL-DESERVED HONOR FOR A FRIEND

Those who attended the 2012 Friends event at Nemours Plantation will not soon forget the enthusiastic presentation by International Crane Foundation co-founder George Archibald. George's crane adventures are legendary and the work of the ICF has brought the whooping crane population back from the brink. We learned recently that Dr. George Archibald has received the National Audubon Society's inaugural Dan W. Lufkin Prize for Environmental Leadership. It came as no surprise that George donated the entire \$100,000 prize to the International Crane Foundation as it celebrates its 40th year!

DOCUMENTING OUR HISTORY

On a chilly early spring day, Preservation Society of Charleston's Evan Thompson, Robert Gurley and Paul Saylor spent many hours tromping through tall grass and in and out of the remains of several historic structures on Nemours Plantation. The goal was to begin to catalogue and photograph these structures to provide a benchmark from which a plan can be developed to record and possibly preserve these historic assets. Nemours welcomes the assistance of these talented professionals as we examine yet another aspect of the treasure known as Nemours Plantation.

AN HONOR FOR ONE OF OUR OWN

Beau Bauer, who is working with Nemours Wildlife Foundation on a wild turkey study and is featured in a Q & A elsewhere in this newsletter, was honored recently at Clemson University with the Outstanding Senior in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology Award. Well done!

SAVE THE DATE!

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is delighted and honored to announce that the featured speaker for our 2013 Friends event on October 19th will be Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Director since 1995 of the highly regarded Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY. Dr. Fitzpatrick will bring with him experiences from an outstanding career spanning more than 40 years in the field of ornithology. His background includes serving as Executive Director at the Archbold Biological Station in Central Florida, 10 years at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and many years in volunteer leadership roles with The Nature Conservancy. Dr. Fitzpatrick is a popular and sought-after speaker, and we are very pleased that he and his wife Molly will join us at Nemours Plantation on October 19th.

MEMORIALS

Donations to Nemours Wildlife Foundation in memory of
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Mr. & Mrs. Lance Blalock
Ms. Deborah Lee Bordeau
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NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

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WHAT IS NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION?

The Nemours Wildlife Foundation was established by the late Eugene duPont III for the purpose of overseeing the stewardship of his 9,800 acre Nemours Plantation. A guiding principal of this stewardship is to advance natural resources conservation by developing, using, and demonstrating best management practices for wildlife and their habitats. The Nemours Plantation is ideally positioned to achieve Mr. duPont's vision by being located within the ecologically diverse and conservationally important ACE Basin which

has been listed as one of the last great places on earth because of its rich, intact natural resources and serves as a national model for land conservation.

Vision Statement

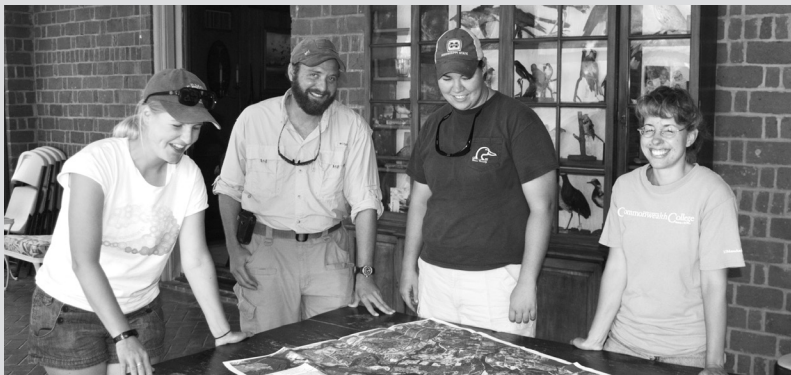
The Nemours Wildlife Foundation leads scientific investigations that generate knowledge needed to conserve our natural resources and heritage and serves as a model for conservation through its stewardship of the Nemours Plantation located within the nationally recognized ACE Basin ecosystem.

Mission

To demonstrate exemplary natural resources stewardship on the 9,800 acre Nemours Plantation and fulfill the conservation legacy of its founder, Eugene duPont III.

To use Nemours Plantation's diverse landscape as an outdoor classroom and laboratory.

To partner with other organizations to enhance opportunities for success in land conservation, outreach, education and scientific studies.



Nemours Wildlife Foundation student researchers (L-R) Kaylee Pollander (B.S. University of Vermont), Beau Bauer (B.S. Clemson University), Molly Kneece (M.S. candidate, Mississippi State University) and Jennifer Fill (Ph.D. candidate, University of South Carolina) examine a map of the ACE Basin to compare field sites for their respective scientific research projects.