
NEMOURS GAZETTE

A publication of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation

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WHY SHOREBIRDS?

In early April, we co-hosted with the SC Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish & Wildlife Service a workshop on shorebirds titled "Value Added Wetlands Management: Ducks and more". It was perhaps the most well attended and diverse mix of attendees we have had for a workshop. Included in the audience of 85 were land-owners, land managers, resource professionals, individuals representing wetland regulatory agencies, and individuals just interested in wildlife conservation. So, why so much interest in a group of birds few can identify accurately, occur in SC for only short periods of time, and upon first examination seem to provide no real value?

Shorebirds, more specifically plovers, oystercatchers, avocets, stilts, and sandpipers, are some of our more interesting birds because of their spectacularly long migrations. For instance, Red Knots breed in the high latitudes of the Canadian Arctic and fly to the tip of South America for the winter. Bar-tailed Godwits nesting in Alaska will overwinter in New Zealand. But, maybe of more importance to us is these birds prefer habitats consisting of broad beaches, open grasslands, and clean wetlands which are also high value habitats for us for food production and quality of life. So, the status of shorebird populations overtime may be an indicator for what is happening with landscapes that are important to our own well being.

As a group, shorebirds share some similar characteristics such as long bills, long legs and toes, and drab coloration. The long bill, legs, and toes allow these birds to wade in shallow water and mudflats and probe into the mud searching for insects, mollusks, and other invertebrates. Most shorebirds nest on the ground and their drab coloration aids in their camouflage during egg incubation.

While some shorebirds breed in South Carolina, our coasts are more important as a stop-over during their migration. Our 500,000 acres of coastal wetlands is a welcome oasis to these birds on their long flights. Having intact, healthy beaches and wetlands for these birds to stop-over, rest, and replenish their energy reserves are essential. Our 70,000 acres of managed wetlands (old, intact ricefields) are particularly critical components in this complex life cycle be-

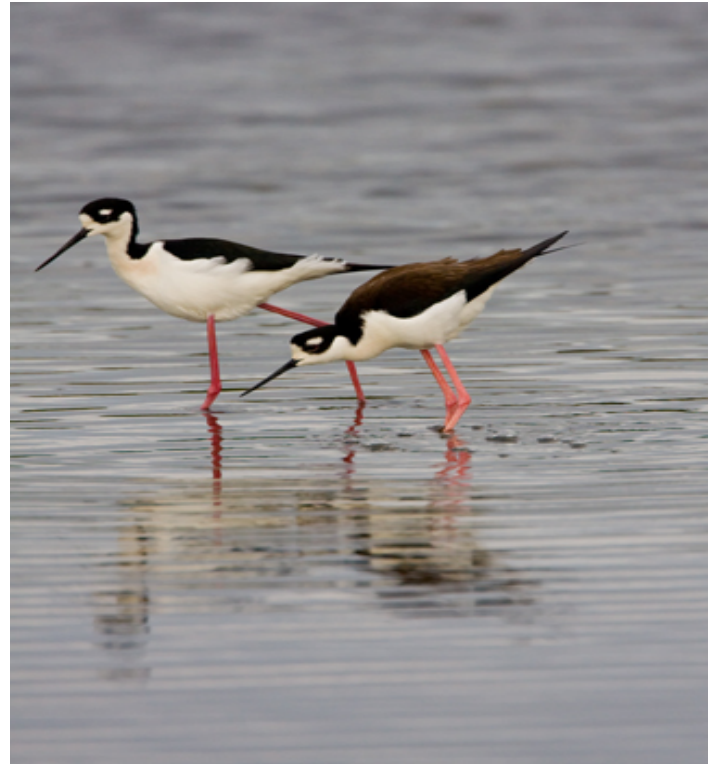


Photo courtesy of Eric Horan

cause these wetlands can be manipulated to provide the exact habitats shorebirds require. This was the focus of our workshop and the reason why so many citizens attended.

Our workshop educated attendees on the conservation issues shorebirds currently face and provided guidelines on how to manipulate managed wetlands to accommodate these birds. For example, rather than opening the gates on water-control structures and draining water from these wetlands immediately after the conclusion of the waterfowl season, resource management professionals are encouraging a slower release of water to expose new mudflats over time. This will allow shorebirds and waterfowl to feast on the abundant invertebrates hiding in the soil substrate. By slowly releasing and then holding water levels so there are scattered pools only 1-4 inches deep in places and other areas showing exposed soil creates the diversity of habitats shorebirds and ducks cannot resist. This management should continue into May until the spring migration has ended and then the process of growing native

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forages for the fall waterfowl season can begin.

Research conducted by Gretchen Nareff, a graduate student in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia and supported by the Nemours Wildlife Foundation found shorebird use on the same wetland that was drained quickly in 2007 but drained slowly for shorebird management in 2008 increased from 56 birds to 1,457 birds between years. On the same wetlands, Gretchen observed 51 ducks in 2007 and 3,000 ducks in 2008. So, it seems waterfowl and shorebirds share similar tastes in late winter and spring habitats.

From my own observations, the wetlands we have managed for shorebirds on Nemours Plantation have produced awe inspiring numbers of birds that is a treat to see and experience. Just on the plots that our graduate student, Gretchen Nareff, studied there were 100 species of birds detected and over 39,000 individuals counted. The diversity and abundance of bird life which can occur in these wetlands is one of the great shows nature produces, and once you have experienced this spectacle it will become a highly anticipated annual event. *Prepared by E. Wiggers with information provided by B. Andres*

QUICK FACTS ABOUT SHOREBIRDS

- 222 species worldwide
- 51 species in North America
- Breeding species in SC: American Oystercatcher, Wilson's Plover, Willet, Black-necked Stilt

Conservation Challenges:

- Birds travel to multiple continents and countries during annual life cycle
- Relatively low reproductive rate (3-4 eggs/nest)
- Preferred habitats (grasslands, wetlands, beaches) highly impacted by humans

Goals for SC:

- Provide 2,400 acres of managed wetland habitat for spring migration event

(Information provided by B. Andres, US FWS)

QUICK FACTS ON MANAGING FOR SHOREBIRDS

- Begin water removal after waterfowl season
- Remove water slowly to expose new habitats through time
- Hold water level at depth of 1-4 inches
- If necessary, add water to keep soil moist
- Maintain low water depth through May

IT WAS A BUSY SPRING AT NEMOURS!



Children, parents and teachers from Charleston's First Scots Presbyterian Kindergarten enjoy birdwatching with Dr. Wiggers at Nemours Plantation.

It was our pleasure to host many springtime visitors, some of whom had interesting comments. Here's what the children said:"I saw some dukes (editor's note: a bird that swims and quacks) and a eagle too. Mr. Ernie tolt me alot that was grat. The bones were cool." "I saw an alligator in the wawter. I saw an eagle in the tree. I liked riding in the truck so so much."

We think this is pretty high praise coming from some of the 15 kindergartners who visited Nemours in April from Charleston's First Scots Presbyterian Kindergarten. There was lots of excitement as the children, teacher Liz Gourdin and a group of parents explored Nemours Plantation, taking turns using a telescope to spy on a young eagle in a nearby nest. They got up close and personal with the biologists' collection of skulls and bones, even helping to identify animal tracks surrounding a scent station. And the picnic by the river was a great way to spend a day away from the classroom.

Introducing wildlife and their habitat to area young people is an important component of Nemours' mission to foster a conservation ethic through education. Each tour is designed to hold particular appeal to the age of the visitors, whether children or adults. And the feedback we receive indicates that we are making strides in our effort to encourage an interest in the protection of our endangered natural resources. How can we not be touched by this statement: "Dear Mr. Ernie, thank you for teaching me all about wioldd animals."

The lesson is a bit more sophisticated, but equally important, when the visitors are older, such as students from Whale Branch Middle School. A reminder of the need to protect the rivers and other natural resources takes on an even more urgent tone as the young people advance toward adulthood and increased responsibility for environmental stewardship.



Forestry students from ACE learn tree surveying skills.

Other young visitors, such as students in the forest sciences program at the Academy for Career Excellence, visit Nemours to put their classroom skills to the test out in the field. If we do our job at Nemours Wildlife Foundation, more and more young people will develop a healthy respect for our treasured resources and may even seek careers in some aspect of wildlife and habitat conservation.

In the meantime, we'll continue to introduce kids to alligators and snakes and "dukes". It's all in a day's work - and fun!

SAVE THE DATE

Nemours Wildlife Foundation's
fourth annual meeting of the
FRIENDS OF NEMOURS

Saturday, October 23rd
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Nemours Plantation
161 Nemours Plantation Road
Yemassee, South Carolina

Guest Speaker:

Patrick McMillan

Host of ETV's

Expeditions with Patrick McMillan

Friends of Nemours Wildlife will receive a formal invitation to this event.

For information on becoming a member, please call

843-846-2539 or email kay@nemourswildlife.org

NEMOURS TO HOST PATRICK MCMILLAN

Award-winning ETV nature program host Patrick McMillan will be the featured guest speaker at the Friends of Nemours annual meeting on Saturday, October 23 at Nemours Plantation. *Expeditions with Patrick McMillan* is an increasingly popular offering by South Carolina ETV. Its co-creator and host, Patrick McMillan, is a professional naturalist, biologist and educator, as well as a frequent guest on other SCETV television and radio programs. He is director of the Campbell Museum of Natural History at Clemson University.

Patrick McMillan received his BS in biology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and his PhD in biological sciences from Clemson University. His research has taken him around the world in pursuit of new species of plants, and he is in great demand as a speaker. Nemours Wildlife Foundation is honored to host Patrick McMillan on October 23.

FRIENDS OF NEMOURS WILDLIFE 2009-2010

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is honored to recognize the following people who have chosen to make an annual gift to support the critical work in research, conservation and education which is the hallmark of Eugene duPont's legacy.

Mr. Colden R. Battey, Jr., Esq.

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A NEMOURS TREASURE

In our increasingly mobile society, it's a bit unusual to find someone who has stayed in the same job for more than three decades. Nemours Plantation, however, has been blessed for nearly 31 years to have Peachie Washington in multiple roles: house manager, major domo, cook extraordinaire, and all-around good friend.

It's rumored that the promise of Peachie's fried chicken has sent attendance soaring at certain meetings at Nemours. And her cakes have a far-flung reputation as well. It's a tradition that Nemours staff members are treated to a birthday lunch of their favorite food, lovingly prepared by Peachie, and everyone gathers for the celebration. No question about it - the shrimp creole in April was fabulous!

In 1979 Peachie was working at Bonny Hall Plantation but the plantation was being sold and, she says, "Mr. duPont sent for me". He had been a guest at Bonny Hall on many occasions and was a fan of Peachie's cooking. When she visited Nemours at his request, Mr. duPont asked, "Can you start today?" She remembers saying no, but she'd be there the next morning. And she was, and still is. With her talented hand in the kitchen and her tender heart, she soon endeared herself to Mr. duPont, his family and the Nemours Plantation staff.

Until his death in 1995, Eugene duPont relied on Peachie to take care of his home and his frequent guests. She remembers dinner parties large and small, and house guests (some, she admits, pretty finicky) who loved to visit Nemours Plantation and its tranquility. During that time, Peachie was fiercely loyal to the duPont family while at the same time raising her own six children and being faithful to her church, a balancing act many working mothers can relate to.



Peachie tends her garden at Nemours Plantation.

These days, in addition to taking care of the "big house" and sometimes cooking for visitors and staff, Peachie loves to garden. She happily plants and tends colorful flowers around the outside of the house, but her true love is the vegetable garden. She fusses and cajoles until one of the men gets out on the tractor and tills her garden. Then the fun begins, and Peachie can be found most summer mornings in her broad-brimmed hat hoeing and watering before the heat of the day sends her inside. The fruits – and vegetables – of her labor are enjoyed by anyone who happens by, including the mailperson and the UPS driver. And fresh-from-the-garden salads are regular lunch fare at Nemours during the growing season.

Although it's hard to imagine someone as formidable as Peachie being fearful of anything, she is not a fan of snakes. And it's easy to tell when Peachie has encountered a snake. Her solution is to chase the snake, throwing kindling and other small pieces of wood in its direction, leaving a trail of natural debris all across the yard and an absent snake who knows better than to call her bluff.

Peachie Washington is indeed a Nemours treasure, and her three decades of devotion are absolutely cause for celebration!

A WARM WELCOME....



The Nemours board welcomes Kay Merrill at its May meeting. L-R: Gigi duPont McShane, Dan Stacy, Ernie Wiggers, Martha Lynn Webb, John Cope, Colden Battey, Pat McGarity, Kay Merrill. Absent: Laura duPont and Michael McShane.

This time last year we announced the addition of Ashley Rhodes to our staff at Nemours Wildlife Foundation. In our introduction, we reported that Ashley had recently launched a new event planning venture. Happily for Ashley, her business has taken off but the demands on her time didn't leave room for Nemours. If you have need for an excellent event planner, contact Ashley at ashleyrhodesevents.com. But then, happily for Nemours, we have recruited Kay Merrill to join our staff and lead our development efforts. Kay has spent nearly 25 years working with non-profits in South Carolina, 15 of those with Boys & Girls Clubs of the Lowcountry where she coordinated fundraising, marketing and communications efforts. Nemours welcomes Kay's skill and experience, and we look forward to her sharing more reflections on Nemours. Read on...

Retirement, for me, is for the birds! Let me explain: I thought I had retired after a long and very fulfilling career in the non-profit arena. I was going to sleep late, putter in my yard, and have regular lunches out with friends. And it worked for a little while. But then I learned of an intriguing opportunity at Nemours Wildlife Foundation. The day I drove to Nemours Plantation to meet with Dr. Ernie Wiggers, I was hooked! The fox squirrels peeked at me from the oak trees as I passed and the turkeys scurried as my car stirred up the dust. As Dr. Wig-

gers and I chatted on the sun porch, ACE Basin waters sparkled fifty yards away. I had no idea what my competition was for this job, but I was certain that nobody could be more enthusiastic.

The rest, as they say, is history, or as much history as a few months' tenure allows. I have watched fledgling bald eagles test their wings; I've learned that what I've always called a duck probably has a much more exotic name; I've listened with fascination as current and former students hash over their research experiences at Nemours; I've met dedicated natural resources professionals from a number of agencies and marveled at their enthusiasm for their work; I've toured remnant rice fields and seen rice trunks still used to control water flow; I've been on the sidelines as the biologists introduced a group of inquisitive kindergartners to snakes, fish and alligators; I've chuckled over funny stories from plantation management staff about matching wits with determined beavers; and I've developed a very healthy respect for the increasingly critical work being accomplished in wildlife and habitat conservation in the South Carolina Lowcountry and beyond. Most of all, I've been grateful for the unexpected opportunity to get acquainted with a diverse group of people who share a common goal of protecting and preserving this extraordinary land and adjoining bodies of water. Lucky me! - Kay Merrill

NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, SC 29945

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A gift to Nemours Wildlife Foundation provides a lasting tribute to honor the memory of a loved one or friend. We encourage you to consider a tax deductible donation which we will acknowledge to you and the person of your choosing.

In addition, please consider a donation in honor of any occasion – a birthday or anniversary, for example – which merits special attention. We will happily acknowledge your thoughtful gift to your honoree(s).

We are honored to acknowledge these recent memorials:

In memory of

Suzanne Echols DeLapp Hudson

John R. and Jan Naylor Cope

Steve, Jackie and Jenna Leigh Church

In memory of

Dylan Rodney Kitler

Michael and Gigi McShane

Nemours Wildlife Foundation Family