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# NEMOURS GAZETTE

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A publication of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation

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## WHOOPING CRANES IN THE ACE BASIN?

Dr. George Archibald, a co-founder of the International Crane Foundation headquartered in Baraboo, Wisconsin, visited the Lowcountry on October 20<sup>th</sup> to address the annual gathering of Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation. It was a spectacular fall day on the banks of the Combahee River and more than 150 guests spent the day visiting with old and new friends, enjoying outstanding Lowcountry cuisine provided by Jimmy Fitts' Catering and marveling at the stories offered up by Dr. Archibald about his world-wide travels on behalf of cranes.

Outdoor writer Jeff Dennis (read his blog at [www.LowcountryOutdoors.com](http://www.LowcountryOutdoors.com)) captured the best of Dr. Archibald's presentation and we thank him for allowing us to reprint portions of his article which appeared in the October 31, 2012 edition of *Charleston Mercury*.

*Whooping cranes stand five-feet tall and are one link in the worldwide population of seven different crane species. The word magnificent is an understatement in describing this grand bird; courtship rituals and survival battles put the crane at or near the top of the list of every avian enthusiast.*

*Four of these birds have been standing tall in the pristine ACE Basin area the last several winters, and the International Crane Foundation (ICF) is keeping a watchful eye on each of them. South Carolina may become the next state to have an experimental population of whooping cranes arriving behind an ultralight aircraft, trying to complete a coup for crane conservation.*

*There are no constants in nature, and an experimental crane population does not guarantee a success. Whooping cranes have been led to South Florida, but the cranes suffer from a high level of predation from bobcats, and they also prove vulnerable to collisions with power lines. The ACE Basin has predators in the form of alligators, but the cranes typically use very shallow waters and could easily spy such a threat. The lack of development in the ACE Basin may be the ultimate factor why the whooping cranes chose to overwinter there.*

*"Each year since 2001 we have partnered with Operation*



photo by Rollin Banno

*Migration to lead whooping cranes to Florida via ultralight aircraft," said Archibald. "Then a pair of whooping cranes volunteered to migrate up to the ACE Basin in 2005. Since then another pair has joined them in wintering there, making the ACE Basin very important as potential crane habitat." Historical data indicates that S.C. was a former wintering ground for whooping cranes, which have since become the most rare of the crane species.*

*Duck hunting is an old sport in the ACE Basin, and will that affect whooping cranes? "Hunters are leaders in conservation, and they do a lot of good for crane habitat," said Archibald. "I'd like to express my regards to them." Archibald adds that the private hunting areas of the ACE Basin would also provide a level of security for any whooping cranes using those areas.*

*Hypothetically, he mentioned that as many as 200 whooping cranes could utilize the ACE Basin. What a grand vision it would be with bald eagles, wood storks, whooping cranes, roseate spoonbills and others creating a colorful palette of feathery delight against our green and buff marshy vistas.*

*What do whooping cranes eat? "Whoopers love to eat blue crabs in shallow waters, and they actually lay claim to their crabbing territories by making a whooping call to any*

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## WHOOPING CRANES *Continued from page 1*

others nearby," said Archibald. The large build of the whooping cranes allows them to produce loud whooping noises, which is how they got their name. Dr. Archibald was kind enough to demonstrate those calls during his presentation.

It would be difficult to overstate the enthusiastic reception received by Dr. Archibald following his presentation and his afternoon Q&A sessions under Nemours Plantation's majestic oaks. Clearly there are many in our area who yearn to see the majestic whooping crane find a more permanent niche in the ACE Basin. At Nemours Wildlife Foundation, we are collaborating with several groups who have an interest in this exciting conservation effort and we hope to implement a study to assess the wintering habitat suitability of the ACE Basin. We pledge to keep you posted.



Nemours CEO (L) Dr. Ernie Wiggers enjoys a moment with Dr. George Archibald following his talk.



Dr. George Archibald (R) with Gigi and Mike McShane at the Friends event.

## IN MEMORIUM

*As this newsletter went to press, we learned of the death of Cora Lee duPont, former wife of Eugene duPont III and mother of Nemours board member Genette "Gigi" duPont McShane.*

*We extend our sympathy to Gigi, Mike and their daughters, and we thank the family for suggesting Nemours Wildlife Foundation as a recipient of memorial gifts.*

## LOSING A FRIEND...

Along with countless others in the Lowcountry, we were shocked and saddened to learn of the tragic death of our friend Jack Keener in an automobile accident on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Jack and Cindy Keener had joined us at Nemours just a few days before for our annual Friends event on a day that brought sunshine, a wonderful program and an opportunity to visit with friends old and new. Consequently, it was even more difficult to absorb the sad news of Jack's passing.

Jack, a well-respected naturalist, was intimately involved in many aspects of conservation in the Lowcountry. He founded the popular Master Naturalist program and taught Master Gardener classes in Beaufort County for many years in his role as County Extension Director and County Agricultural Agent.

Jack's love of flying and his commercial pilot experience provided a unique relationship with Nemours Wildlife Foundation. For several years, Nemours senior biologist Eddie Mills flew up and down the South Carolina coast with Jack at the controls of his airplane fitted with radio tracking devices strapped to the struts. The two spent many hours tracking Mottled Ducks which had been outfitted with radio transmitters as part of a multi-year research project funded by Nemours, Ducks Unlimited and SCDNR.

Jack Keener was much more than a research partner; he was a good friend. And he will be missed.

## PARTNERS

***Many thanks to the people, companies and organizations whose partnerships assist in the fulfillment of our mission. We absolutely could not do it without you!***

ACE Basin Taskforce  
 American Forest Management  
 Animal Medical Center of the Lowcountry  
 APHIS  
 Avian Conservation Center  
 Beaufort County School District  
 Beaufort Open Land Trust  
 Bonny Hall Plantation  
 Center for Birds of Prey  
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 United States Marine Corps  
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 Veterinary Surgical Care  
 Walmart

***Thank you!***

## THANKS TO FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS – and Merry Christmas to all!

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is very grateful to those generous donors known as *Friends of Nemours* whose annual gifts assist in providing opportunities for under-graduate and graduate students to add to a growing body of research through a wide range of studies in the natural resources arena. Educational programs conducted at Nemours Plantation annually reach hundreds of adults and children in an effort to foster a conservation ethic among those visitors and their spheres of influence. These programs are supported by *Friends of Nemours* and the many other donors whose commitment to conservation mirrors our own. If you would like information about membership in *Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation*, please email Kay Merrill at [kay@nemourswildlife.org](mailto:kay@nemourswildlife.org). A donation reply envelope is included with this newsletter. We hope you will consider a year-end gift to support the work of Nemours Wildlife Foundation. ***Thank you!***

## A SALUTE TO WOUNDED WARRIORS



Enthusiastic supporters welcome wounded warriors to Nemours Plantation for a fall deer hunt

Nemours Plantation has hosted two recent events honoring America's wounded warriors, offering opportunities for these heroes to enjoy some welcome outdoor time in deer stands or duck blinds.

Wounded veterans, people in wheelchairs and children of deployed service members were among the hunters who participated.

A two-day event in October hosted by the Lowcountry Chapter of Safari Club International and SCDNR brought together several hundred volunteers and more than 50 hunters whose disabilities didn't dampen their enthusiasm for the hunt. Twenty-four private properties opened their gates to hunters and their supporters, resulting in 46 deer harvested. When not engaged in the hunt, participants enjoyed the quiet beauty of Nemours Plantation, camaraderie among friends old and new, and outstanding cuisine prepared by local chefs. Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, Brigadier General Lori Reynolds, was on hand to greet the warriors and thank them for their service.

A mid-December duck hunt sponsored by Ducks Unlimited and many local conservation enthusiasts was enjoyed by 14 local wounded warriors. Modeled somewhat after the wounded warrior deer hunt event, this duck hunt was an effort by the community to honor and say thank-you to our service men and women. A Friday evening dinner and after-the-hunt breakfast were hosted at Nemours Plantation. These events provided great opportunities for the soldiers to interact with the community and culminated in a DU waterfowl warrior dinner and conservation banquet on Saturday evening in Beaufort, rounding out several days of activities enjoyed by all.

## NEWS FROM THE BOARD

While we hope they won't go too far, Board members Martha Lynn Webb and Pat McGarity will step down in February after serving three-year terms and having brought considerable expertise and enthusiasm to the Board of Directors. Chairman Colden Battey, as well as officers Gigi duPont McShane and Dan Stacy will continue to serve, along with emeritus members John Cope, Laura duPont and Mike McShane.

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is pleased to announce the addition of four new Board members. Beaufort veterinarian Bill Sammons and former SCDNR director John Frampton of Chapin, SC, joined the Board in August, while Rose Hill Plantation owner Lane Morrison, an attorney with Hunter, Maclean, Exley and Dunn in Savannah, and Brays Island resident, retired Enterprise Rent A Car executive Bill Lortz will join the Board at its quarterly meeting in February.

"I am very excited about the four new Board members we have added because of their passion for conservation and

their diverse backgrounds," said Nemours President and CEO Dr. Ernie Wiggers. "Looking at the background of each new Board member, there are many examples of how they have already contributed to wildlife conservation efforts. Some have served on boards of related non-profits, some are landowners and are already leaders in stewardship, and others have a lifetime of working in the wildlife profession," Wiggers said. "Together these individuals, in concert with our existing Board members, will provide Nemours Wildlife Foundation the kind of smart leadership we need as we chart our next decade of activities. I look forward to working with these individuals, learning of their aspirations for the Foundation and together growing this Foundation. The next few years should be exciting."

Nemours Wildlife Foundation will undertake a strategic planning process early in 2013 to set the course for the Foundation in the continuance of its mission *to be good stewards of our natural resources, conducting scientific studies leading to the conservation of wildlife and their habitats, and fostering a conservation ethic through education.*



## NEWS AND NOTES:

- Mike McShane, Nemours Wildlife Foundation board member emeritus and former chairman of SCDNR, was honored in September along with former U.S. Senator Fritz Hollings for their work to protect the environment. The award was presented by Conservation Voters of South Carolina, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year representing state environmental groups on legislative issues.
- Landowners and managers along the South Carolina coast will now find it easier to obtain permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to expedite emergency repairs and manage dikes and wetlands thanks to the development of a general permit which is the result of a process spearheaded by Nemours Wildlife Foundation and Folk Land Management. The general permit was announced at a press conference held at Nemours Plantation in mid-August.
- Several experts from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were on hand at our Friends event in October to demonstrate a process which is necessary for the resto-

ration of the endangered Red Cockaded Woodpeckers (RCW) on Nemours Plantation. Now that nearly 720 acres of Nemours woodlands have been thinned to replicate a traditional pine savanna, it is hoped that Red Cockaded Woodpeckers will be released this coming fall. It takes the RCW several years to identify a tree suitable for nesting and then begin the long process of building a nest. Through extensive research, the USFWS has developed a nesting box which can be installed in trees that have been prepared manually, thereby expediting the process of reintroducing the RCW. We look forward to updating readers on the success of this project.

- In yet another example of the partnership between Nemours Wildlife Foundation and Outdoor Dream Foundation (ODF), we have received 12 rod and reel outfits from Lew's Corporation through The Crappie Hole in Chapin, SC. This equipment will be used when youth with terminal or life-threatening illnesses visit Nemours Plantation under the sponsorship of ODF. Robert Kitler and Justin Rickenbaker of the Nemours staff spend considerable time with the youngsters and their families throughout the year enjoying the variety of outdoor experiences available at Nemours. Many thanks to all who help provide some much-needed respite for these young people away from the difficult daily challenges of their illnesses.
- It's impossible to adequately thank the many volunteers who assist with duck captures and surgeries as part of our multi-year Mottled Duck study funded by Nemours, Ducks Unlimited and SCDNR. Local veterinarians, their staff, students and other interested individuals spend many hours during the summer assuring that each captured duck is treated professionally, safely and gently in the furtherance of this important scientific research. In addition, partnerships with hospitals, veterinary clinics and equipment providers are essential to the success of this work. To each and every partner, our most sincere thanks for your time, your expertise and your dedication to research such as this which provides critical information about our precious natural resources.
- Special thanks to SCDNR veterinarian Dr. Al Segars, Stewardship Coordinator of the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve, who spoke compellingly during the October 20<sup>th</sup> Friends event about the health of wildlife in the ACE Basin. Dr. Segars is often the person who gets the call when a mammal such as a dolphin or a manatee is injured, or a magnificent bird of prey has an unfortunate encounter with a vehicle or predator. We are fortunate to have this skilled and compassionate friend of wildlife in our midst.



*Brett Craig of USFWS prepares to demonstrate the placement of a Red Cockaded Woodpecker nest.*

# NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, SC 29945

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## EMERITUS

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**Laura E. duPont**

**Michael G. McShane**

*Battery Creek High School visual arts instructors John Cullinen and Patsy Stowe recently brought a group of students to Nemours Plantation. We are pleased to share this impressive work by student Stefani Lee depicting the old Nieuport barn and stables on Nemours Plantation. The Beaufort County School District showcases student work in its River of Words student publications. Nemours is honored to have been a venue for inspiring creative works by students and we salute the District, instructors and students for this collaborative effort.*



*Stefani Lee*