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# NEMOURS GAZETTE

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A publication of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation

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

[www.nemourswildlifefoundation.org](http://www.nemourswildlifefoundation.org)

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## The Unsung Conservationists of the ACE Basin

Almost every first-time visitor to Nemours tells me what a beautiful place it is and of course there is no reason for me to disagree. But, I inform them, the wonderful landscapes they see at Nemours can be seen at countless other properties throughout the ACE Basin. That is what makes this region so spectacular! I also give credit for the wonderful views first to nature, and second to our land management team.



*Nemours Plantation land managers tackle a massive dike maintenance project.*

I suspect most of us under-appreciate the scope of work and responsibilities making up the duties of a land manager in the Lowcountry. I will use Nemours Plantation as an example. On Nemours we have a little over 91,000 linear feet of dikes and 46 water-control structures. We have not measured all the internal miles of roads, but these add up to a considerable number. Add to this the dozens of miles of fire-breaks, along with buildings, tractors, work trucks, etc. to be maintained and the enormity of the task begins to come into focus.

To properly accomplish all the tasks required of a land manager, that person has to be part farmer, part wildlife biologist, part forester, part mechanic, electrician, engineer, outdoorsman, and carpenter. And, to be really successful he has to have the people skills to sometimes deal with a demanding land owner. Our staff here at Nemours also has to accommodate the weird, unusual, and sometimes wacky needs of graduate students and scientists conducting their research projects.

Above all, a land manager has to be flexible and ready to deal with the unusual or unexpected. One comment I often hear from our staff is there is no such thing as a routine day

because something unexpected always comes up to interfere with the best laid plans. Ready to set a prescribed burn? *Sorry, the weather has changed.* Tide right for installing a rice-trunk? *That won't happen today, a hydraulic line split on the track-hoe.* The dikes are being mowed today? *No, the intern got too close to the edge and the tractor slipped off the dike!* Regardless of the plan, there are countless land

mines ready to explode and change a routine day into the unexpected.

Another trait common among these individuals is a willingness to help their neighbors. I have found this trait to hold true whether you need to borrow a piece of equipment to finish a project, need an extra guide for a waterfowl hunt, or seek permission to trespass to follow a wayward radio-marked wild turkey or mottled duck, Lowcountry managers are always ready to help.

I have had the pleasure to meet many land managers and admire their work while visiting different properties during the past 15 years. Their passion for their work is quite remarkable and it is certainly evident as you ride through the ACE Basin. So, the next time you are visiting someone's property in the ACE Basin and it looks well maintained, go ahead and marvel at the work of nature but also know there might have been a little help from the land management team! I am sure land managers sometimes feel their work goes unnoticed or unappreciated, but the point of this article is to say that is not true. We do notice and we do appreciate! Without you, land managers, the ACE Basin would not look as great or be as enjoyable to explore. Keep up the good work, and we salute all of you!

- E. Wiggers

To Dr. Wiggers, Mr. Beau,

Thank you for such a  
good time. My favorite  
part was when we saw  
all the eagles - Maddie

Thank you for  
a great field trip.  
my favorite part  
was the ride on  
the wagon. -Jalen

Thank you for  
the trip, it was  
really fun. I had  
a great time - Noah

Thank you for an

Awesome field trip. I  
Had such a good

Thank you for a very fun  
trip, Even if we did walk  
for like 2 hours, we saw  
eagles and alligators  
and it was awesome!

time. My favorite part  
was the deer antlers  
and skull and the  
Alligator skull. It was  
All really cool though!!

Thank again,  
Molly

Thank you so much  
-Felicity Swanson

That was  
the Best  
field trip  
ever thank  
you so much  
-Xavier

Thank for an awesome field trip  
you My fav part was the  
hay ride that  
-Kari

Thank you for that  
great field trip

Ang



## NEWS & NOTES

- If you were here for the Friends event in the fall of 2012, you already know that **Dr. George Archibald**, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation, has a contagiously enthusiastic personality and is a strong advocate for large birds, whooping cranes in particular. So we were delighted to welcome Dr. Archibald back to Nemours Wildlife Foundation in January when the cranes were wintering in Nemours Plantation's impoundments. George's guidance has been important as Nemours Wildlife Foundation and Clemson University lay groundwork for a multi-year study which may help determine the long-term suitability of the ACE Basin as a wintering site for highly endangered whooping cranes.
- And because we have whooping cranes on our minds these days, it was also good to welcome **Dr. John French** to Nemours, both in January and again in March. Dr. French is research manager at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland where he heads the whooping crane restoration program and also sits on the US-Canada Whooping Crane Recovery Team. Like George Archibald, John French has been an important partner as Nemours Wildlife Foundation and others look to the future of whooping cranes in the ACE Basin.
- More than 20 friends of **Jack Keener** joined his widow Cindy, his son Jack, and Nemours Wildlife Foundation board members and staff on February 21st for a barbecue lunch (Jack's favorite) and the dedication of a plaque in memory of Jack and his outstanding contributions to conservation in South Carolina and the Lowcountry. For several years, Jack piloted his airplane to allow Nemours researchers to track mottled ducks as part of a multi-year study. His untimely death in a highway accident in October 2012 was a huge blow to his family and colleagues, but the stories shared at Nemours Plantation in February made us grateful for wonderful memories of this well-respected friend of conservation.
- In early May Nemours Wildlife Foundation was pleased to host U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary **Robert Bonnie** and a contingent from the Lowcountry offices of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Services. Under Secretary Bonnie was in the area for an update on NRCS partnerships with landowners who are restoring longleaf pine forests as well as those who are working to control invasive plant species.
- Visitors to Nemours Wildlife Foundation during this busy spring season included groups from Spring Island Institute's **Master Naturalists** program, USCB's **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute**, and students from **St. Peter's Catholic School** in Beaufort, **Charleston Day School** and **Technical College of the Lowcountry**. It's always fun to see Nemours Plantation through the eyes of first-time visitors. The goal is always to send these visitors away with a new understanding of the fragile balance between humans and wildlife and a recognition of their own personal responsibility to protect that balance.
- We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge April 13th as the day when **Laura duPont**, widow of the late Eugene duPont III and one of three founding trustees of Nemours Wildlife Foundation, celebrated a milestone birthday. (In deference to every woman's wish to not have her age revealed, we won't mention *which* milestone this was!) Happy Birthday, and many more, to our beloved friend and benefactor, Laura duPont!

### Many thanks to The Beaufort Fund

Lots of smiling faces were in evidence in early February at The Shed in Port Royal as staff and board members of dozens of Lowcountry organizations gathered to celebrate the impact of local non-profits and to receive grant awards from The Beaufort Fund of Coastal Community Foundation. Sixty-four organizations serving Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper counties, representing an astonishing array of services (from emergency response to dementia support groups to preschool education, migrant services, medical care, land and wildlife conservation and a huge diversity of additional services) received more than \$600,000 in funding to



*Graduate student Molly Kneese makes good use of an ATV purchased in early 2014 with a grant from The Beaufort Fund.*

meet community needs. The 2014 awards bring the total distributed by The Beaufort Fund to more than \$6 million since its inception in 1997. Nemours Wildlife Foundation is honored to be included in the line-up of these 64 non-profits recognized for service to the Lowcountry. This year's award to Nemours Wildlife Foundation enabled the purchase of a heavy-duty all-terrain vehicle which allows access to remote areas of Nemours Plantation by graduate

students and interns as they conduct scientific research to add to a growing and important body of knowledge about wildlife and their habitats.

## OYSTERS AND MORE...

It came on the heels of several weeks of unusually disagreeable weather in the Lowcountry. Nemours Wildlife Foundation's second annual oyster roast was held on a truly spectacular Sunday afternoon in early March and provided an opportunity for Friends of Nemours and other guests to mingle, enjoy some outstanding local cuisine and hear an update on the work of the foundation.

More than 125 guests heard updates from several Nemours Wildlife Foundation students about their respective projects – everything from mottled ducks to wild turkeys to eastern diamondback rattlesnakes. And Dr. John French, research manager at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, spoke of the excitement generated by the news of the return during the winter of a pair of highly endangered whooping cranes to Nemours Plantation's impoundments. Movement of the 101 whooping cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population remains of great interest among researchers and you will hear more soon about a collaborative study partially funded by Nemours Wildlife Foundation to learn more about the overwintering habits of these magnificent birds.



*Staff biologist Beau Bauer prepares to demonstrate a rocket net used to capture female wild turkeys for banding and fixing radio transmitters.*

Staff biologist Beau Bauer and intern Matt Kynoch provided a dramatic (and loud) demonstration of the rocket net used to capture wild turkey hens which are then outfitted with transmitters to facilitate radio tracking during their nesting and brood-rearing phase.

Graduate student Molly Kneece and intern Kaylee Pollander displayed their uniquely outfitted truck which allows them to track mottled ducks. The truck draws curious stares each time they venture onto Highway 17 but these intrepid researchers have grown accustomed to the attention.



*This uniquely outfitted truck allows researchers to track radio outfitted mottled ducks throughout the ACE Basin.*

Doctoral candidate Jen Fill, in her typically enthusiastic fashion, talked about her work at Nemours and the ACE Basin tramping through the woods turning over logs looking for snakes and amphibians. Brad O'Hanlon from Marshall University briefed the group on his project in the Lowcountry studying eastern diamondback rattlesnakes, followed by Clemson graduate student Nikki Roach who discussed her research involving black rails along the South Carolina coast. A brand-new ATV purchased with a grant from the



*Oyster shucking at its finest at Nemours' annual spring event.*

Beaufort Fund of the Coastal Community Foundation rounded out the show-and-tell. The ATV will allow researchers to access hard-to-reach places on Nemours Plantation in their search for elusive wildlife and nesting sites.

Scientific research and education programs at Nemours Wildlife Foundation are funded in large part by Friends of Nemours, and the March oyster roast provided a perfect opportunity to thank those special donors and remind them of the scope and importance of the work they so generously support.

## WE MET THE CHALLENGE!

In our 2013 year-end newsletter we reported that Nemours Wildlife Foundation was offered a challenge grant of \$20,000 if we could match that amount with new donations by March 2014. Happily, with strong support from dedicated donors, by early January we were able to meet the challenge and begin renovations to convert an existing building to a two-bedroom handicap accessible facility to house graduate students and interns. The facility, dubbed Stroban Cottage, will also be available to families who visit Nemours Plantation through our partnership with Outdoor Dream Foundation which works with youngsters battling serious health issues.

Many thanks to all those who stepped up with additional donations to make this much-needed facility a reality. The \$20,000 challenge grant donor has our most sincere gratitude. The Bakker Family Fund at Coastal Community Foundation provided funding to help furnish the cottage and many others helped to meet the challenge. This was a great team effort that transformed a building sitting idle into warm, comfortable living quarters.

and Ms. Merrill,

Thank you for the cool field trip  
my favorite part was seeing the river after  
- Josh

Thanks for an AMAZING time. It was awesome to  
see all the animals and their bones! - Brigid Murphy

Thank you so much for the cool field  
trip, I thought that it was really  
cool to learn about the wood ducks.

- Hunter Burton

Thank you so much it was the best field trip  
all year - Tim Barbas

From the 6<sup>th</sup>  
Grade Class at  
St. Peter's School

It was a perfect day - the kids had a ball!!  
Thank you so much! Kristi



# NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, SC 29945

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*This pair of whooping cranes spent time in Nemours Plantation's impoundments in the early months of 2014, as they did in several previous winters.*

*A collaboration between Nemours Wildlife Foundation, Clemson University and other partners will study the suitability of the ACE Basin for overwintering in future years for this highly endangered species.*

*(photo courtesy of Eric Horan)*



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