
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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THOUGHTS ON THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is proud to be a part of a larger community in the ACE Basin where colleagues, agencies, and citizens not only work together but care about each other. This caring goes beyond our traditional duties of land stewardship, scientific studies, and educational programs to include helping others who might be experiencing particular challenges in life. Examples of this are the Wounded Warrior deer hunts we just completed for the 11th year. These hunts involved 24 different properties. In mid-December numerous properties helped host the 3rd annual Warrior Waterfowl hunt where servicemen and women from the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station and MCRD Parris Island are invited on a waterfowl hunt.

Another way the Foundation is reaching out and offering a helping hand is through our involvement with the Outdoor Dream Foundation (ODF), www.outdoordream.org. The ODF is a not for profit charity that started in the upstate of South Carolina. Its mission is to provide outdoor adventures to children who have been diagnosed with terminal or life-threatening illnesses. We have been partnering with ODF to provide kids and their families hunting and fishing trips on Nemours and other cooperating properties in the Lowcountry. These trips allow kids and their families to continue doing the outdoor sports they are so interested in and have time together enjoying spectacular views, sunrises, sunsets, world class fishing and hunting, and needed time away from worrying about medical issues.

Hosting these families has become a source of pride for our staff, especially Justin Rickenbaker who leads this activity for us. Thanks to gifts by our supporters, we have remodeled a building on the plantation and made it into a very comfortable temporary lodge for ODF families to use. While Justin and the staff look forward to hosting these families, it is a very time consuming task that takes up most of their weekend. As you might imagine, taking a kid hunting or fishing who might have to remain in a wheel-chair and have other physical limitations because of their illness requires much planning and lots of patience. We have been fortunate to have Nancy Benton, the Lowcountry coordinator for ODF, volunteer her time and provide that much needed “woman’s touch” making sure the ODF families have the best experience possible while here.

In this season of giving, I cannot think of a better example of ‘giving back’ than what Nancy, Justin, Ray Bass, Robert Kitler, and many others do for the ODF kids and their families. Close friendships and bonds are developed between the families and staff, and we remain anxious and hopeful for positive outcomes as each kid battles their illness.

We have attached a couple of Thank you letters from families to show how important they view these outings. I wanted to write this story to say Thank You to an amazing group of individuals I am fortunate to work with every day, who are willing to be so unselfish with their time, and so willing to reach out to others in their time of need. For me, this is the perfect Christmas gift!

-Ernie P. Wiggers



Justin Rickenbaker and Outdoor Dream participant developing a hunting strategy for the evening.



Justin Rickenbaker, Robert Kitler and a ODF participant exploring Nemours Plantation.

The following letter is one of many the Outdoor Dream Foundation has received from kids they have reached out to.

My name is Jarrett Cantrell. On December 31, 2012 or January 1, 2013 my life changed completely. I had a wreck. I was alone, no one really knows when it happened but we do know I'm lucky and blessed to be alive. I was in ICU on life support for 31 days. After that, another 30 days in the hospital, then to Roger C. Peace for rehabilitation for 6 weeks. I couldn't talk or walk. I didn't know who I was or where I was. My Memaw (Grandmother) was by my side the entire time so my story comes from her telling me. I came home from the hospital in a wheelchair. I was an avid hunter, fisherman and loved the outdoors. I would rather sleep in a tent than a hotel. After my memory came back, I could remember things from years back but I had no short term memory. I still don't. If you tell me something today you will have to tell me tomorrow also. Life looked pretty depressing.

I live with my grandparents. Life was good up until my wreck. I lived on a farm with a pond nearby and plenty of woods for hunting and fishing. I thought those days were over. Memaw was taking me to Counseling at Due West and there I met Cameron. She is awesome but she let me have it when I disrespected my Memaw. I learned that I had two brain injuries. One of them left me partially paralyzed. Depression was setting in fast. But as God always does, he stepped in.

You see Cameron and Memaw signed me up for The Outdoor Dreams Foundation. Cameron's brother is Justin Rickenbaker. I remember their names because they made such an impact on my life. The Outdoor Dreams sent me on an awesome trip in October of 2014 and I know it was on a Plantation, due to my injury I can't remember the name of it. I killed my first buck there, a 12 pointer. I cried, my Memaw cried and we enjoyed that trip so much. Then in November they took me on a Gator hunt. One of my lifelong dreams. Here I met people who I will never forget and who are the most caring, giving people I have ever met.

One being Mrs. Nancy (Benton). She treated me like I was her own. I am sure she would have took a stick to me if I needed it. My Memaw couldn't go with me to keep me in line because my Aunt Summer was in labor early. Then I met the man I wish I could be just like, Justin (Rickenbaker). Now I don't remember his last name but I'll never forget his face or his first name. Justin has a heart like Nancy's. They made sure we all enjoyed our trip and they do their best to make sure the hunt goes well. I know that my gator was a joint effort. Thank you God again. I can't say enough about Justin and Nemours Plantation. They go out of their way for people like me and for young people who suffer from life affecting situations. I will forever be grateful to those people who have helped me see some of my dreams come true. I will forever remember some names and faces: Brad, Nancy, Marty, and Justin.

The following letter is one from the parent of one of the ODF kids.

As a parent of a child battling Leukemia, I wanted to take a few minutes to say thank you to Nemours Plantation and Justin Rickenbaker. Nemours Plantation is simply amazing, from the abundance of wildlife, beautiful natural landscapes, and the most sincere and generous group of people we have ever met. While we have met many people while spending time at Nemours, Justin has made a lasting impression on my son and the entire Outdoor Dream Foundation family. I know this because anytime that we (Outdoor Dream Foundation families) attend a hunt, fundraiser or just dinner, we always have a discussion about Justin's generosity and his attempt to make every child's visit to Nemours Plantation a magical one. Many children, suffering life threatening illnesses, have limited time to spend outdoors, Justin assures their time is spent enjoying the outdoors and for that short time taking their minds off of their day to day battle. We look forward to spending time at Nemours and particularly Justin for many years to come. Thank you all, for all that you do!!!

The Thorpe's
(Jackson Thorpe, Leukemia Patient)

NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

Understanding Impacts of Impoundment Management on Invertebrate Production

Aquatic invertebrates comprise a significant component of waterfowl diets. In addition to carbohydrates and lipids acquired from vegetative and seed consumption, waterfowl require protein and amino acids obtained by consuming invertebrates. A complete diet is essential to maintaining body condition in order to complete migrations and facilitate reproductive success. Aquatic invertebrates are also the primary dietary component of shorebirds, feeding day and night to replenish depleted energy reserves as they complete long-range inter-hemispheric migrations.

Numerous studies have reported the importance of invertebrates to migratory waterbirds. This is especially relevant in managed impoundments due to their heavy use and preference by multiple guilds of waterbirds.

Despite previous studies, there is a distinct lack of knowledge regarding management effects on invertebrate communities along the Atlantic Flyway—particularly in brackish impoundments common in the Lowcountry. The primary objective of my study will be to investigate management techniques that encourage invertebrate production and availability as waterbird prey.

Field work will consist of arduous days slogging through pluff mud collecting vegetation and substrate samples.



Beau Bauer, Staff Biologist, sampling invertebrates in a managed tidal impoundment.

The real work, though, begins in the laboratory wherein samples will be processed and laboriously picked through under a microscope in search of invertebrate organisms barely visible to the human eye. Despite their small size, the significance of invertebrates and the role they play in the overall health and functionality of our ecosystems requires further scientific understanding in order to be better stewards and conservationists. I believe Edward O. Wilson said it best when he described invertebrates as, “the little things that run the world”.

Beau Bauer will conduct this research as part of his Masters Thesis with Clemson University. Beau received his B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Clemson in 2012, served as a Nemours intern in 2013, and was hired as

our staff biologist in 2014. Partners on this project include the James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center, Clemson University, and Nemours Wildlife Foundation. His advisors are Drs. Drew Lanham (Clemson University), Rick Kaminski (Director of the James Kennedy Center), Chris Marsh (Spring Island Institute), and Ernie Wiggers (Nemours Wildlife Foundation).

-Beau Bauer

Movements, Habitat Use and Potential Competition for Nest Boxes by Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks in coastal South Carolina

The Black-Bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) originates from South and Central America and has been expanding its range since the late 20th century into the Southeastern U.S. This species is relatively new to South Carolina (SC) with its first official sighting in 1994. As numbers grew and evidence of successful nesting was documented, these ducks were officially considered established in 2003.

As a first step toward a broader ecological understanding, we must examine how this species selects and utilizes habitat in SC. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) has color banded over 100 Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks as part of a collaborative banding program with six other states. Birds banded in SC have been reported in Florida, Georgia, Virginia and New Jersey, and these recent banding efforts suggest some birds migrate to Florida during the winter. These current efforts will continue to provide insight into Black-Bellied Whistling-Duck distributions but there is still a need to expand these efforts to learn more specific information on habitat use and temporal movements.



Gillie Croft, Intern, inspects a duck box for use.

Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks are secondary cavity nesters (ie: they do not create their own cavities), similar to our native waterfowl species the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). Natural tree cavities for Wood Ducks were historically lacking in most southeastern woodlands due to timber harvesting and development. To mitigate for this lack of natural cavities, artificial nesting boxes were erected as far back as 1939 and continue today with potentially tens of thousands of boxes having been deployed. Woods Ducks readily use these boxes with studies showing > 85% occupancy by Wood Ducks. These artificial nest boxes have been credited with increasing the Wood Duck population and making it the number one duck harvested by hunters in SC and other southeastern states. Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks readily use nesting boxes designed for Wood Ducks. This niche overlap creates concern for competition at the nest site.

Therefore my research objectives will be to first understand how this species traverses, selects and utilizes habitats in SC by implanting 20 Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks with GPS transmitters. This will allow us to determine the extent to which these birds are using SC habitats and whether they are year-round residents or seasonal visitors. Secondly, I will examine competition for nesting boxes by monitoring boxes in the ACE basin and Santee-Delta regions of coastal South Carolina. My study will provide baseline biological and ecological information that will help guide management decisions for the species. Project partners include the Nemours Wildlife Foundation, The James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center, Ducks Unlimited, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and Clemson University.

Gillie Croft will be working on this project for his Masters of Science degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology at Clemson University. Gillie is a graduate of Horry Georgetown Technical College and received his B.S. degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology from Clemson University in 2014. Gillie served as a Nemours intern in 2010 and 2015. -Gillie Croft

NEWS AND NOTES

Leadership Beaufort

Leadership Beaufort members and staff enjoyed a day at Nemours this fall with a presentation on the history of the ACE Basin and how managed tidal impoundments play an important role in the conservation of migrating and native waterfowl. The participants were treated to a wagon tour of Nemours Plantation where they were able to see rice trunks in action, tour impoundments and view an eagle's nest. Nemours was delighted to host this class again!

Friends of Nemours

Nemours Wildlife Foundation was honored to welcome our members and friends to the annual **Friends of Nemours** event in October. Our guest speaker, Dr. Richard Kaminski, director of the recently founded James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center, captured the audiences' attention with an enjoyable and informative presentation. This year marks Nemours Wildlife Foundations 20th Anniversary and several former interns and students joined us in celebrating this important milestone by speaking of their time at NWF and sharing where life's journey has taken them. We are proud of their accomplishments and the contributions they have and are making in research, conservation, stewardship and education.



Wounded Warrior Hunt

The **11th Annual Wounded Warrior Hunt** took place in November at Nemours Plantation and more than 40 hunters and their guides enjoyed hunting on surrounding private properties in the ACE Basin. The Parris Island USMC band provided entertainment and volunteer chefs and members of the Lowcountry Chapter of Safari Club International provided delicious and hearty meals. Therapy dogs of all breeds and sizes and their handlers were welcomed with enthusiasm and much attention. Thanks are due to many volunteers and the Sheldon Fire Department who make this event possible.



NEWS AND NOTES CONTINUED

U.S. Army Rangers

Jeff Schettler, a retired police K-9 handler and certified military trainer, conducted tactical tracking training at Nemours Plantation early this fall for members of the **U.S. Army Rangers**. We were pleased to be able to offer Nemours Plantation as the location for this important and much needed training. We appreciate the opportunity to support our servicemen and women!



Stanley B. Farbstein Endowment Fund

Nemours Wildlife Foundation has received a grant from the **Stanley B. Farbstein Endowment Fund**. This grant will allow Nemours to sponsor several field trips for approximately 180 area students aboard the SCDNR Discovery vessel where they will take part in the Carolina Coastal Discovery Marine Education Program. Nemours Wildlife Foundation is grateful for this grant and we are looking forward to providing this opportunity to area students.

LowCountry Master Naturalist

On a beautiful and pleasant day in November, **LowCountry Master Naturalist** students were treated to a tour of Nemours Plantation as well as a program covering the history of the ACE Basin, wetlands and bird ecology. Nemours Wildlife Foundation is proud to contribute to this program's mission of creating a corps of well-informed citizen volunteers.

Warrior Duck Hunt

The **3rd Annual Warrior Duck Hunt** took place in early December with 16 servicemen and women enjoying an early morning duck hunting expedition followed by breakfast at Nemours Plantation. These servicemen and women have recently returned from deployment and welcomed a day of rest and relaxation. Thank you to all the surrounding property owners for opening their doors to our armed forces personnel.



"A Lowcountry Luncheon"

Save the Date- Sunday May 22, 2016- "A Lowcountry Luncheon"- Beaufort County Open Land Trust and Nemours Wildlife Foundation are co-hosting this Fundraiser/Booksigning event featuring author Mary Alice Monroe as the guest speaker on the majestic grounds of Nemours Plantation. Tickets include lunch and a signed copy of her upcoming novel, *A Lowcountry Wedding*, to be released in early May. A *New York Times* best-selling author, Monroe excels in creating an absorbing story and atmosphere in conjunction with important ecological concerns. Price \$85/person for more information, contact Patricia Denkler at patricianne@islc.net.





Last year many of you solved your gift giving dilemmas by giving a donation in the name of someone you cared for to Nemours Wildlife Foundation.

Your gifts were very much appreciated and helped support our scientific research and educational programs year round.

We hope you will consider giving a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation as your holiday gift for someone again this year. We will send that individual an acknowledgement of your gift and add them to our newsletter mailing list.

NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, SC 29945

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happy holidays

**TO ALL OUR ARMED FORCES
PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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A successful 11th Annual Wounded Warriors Deer Hunt!