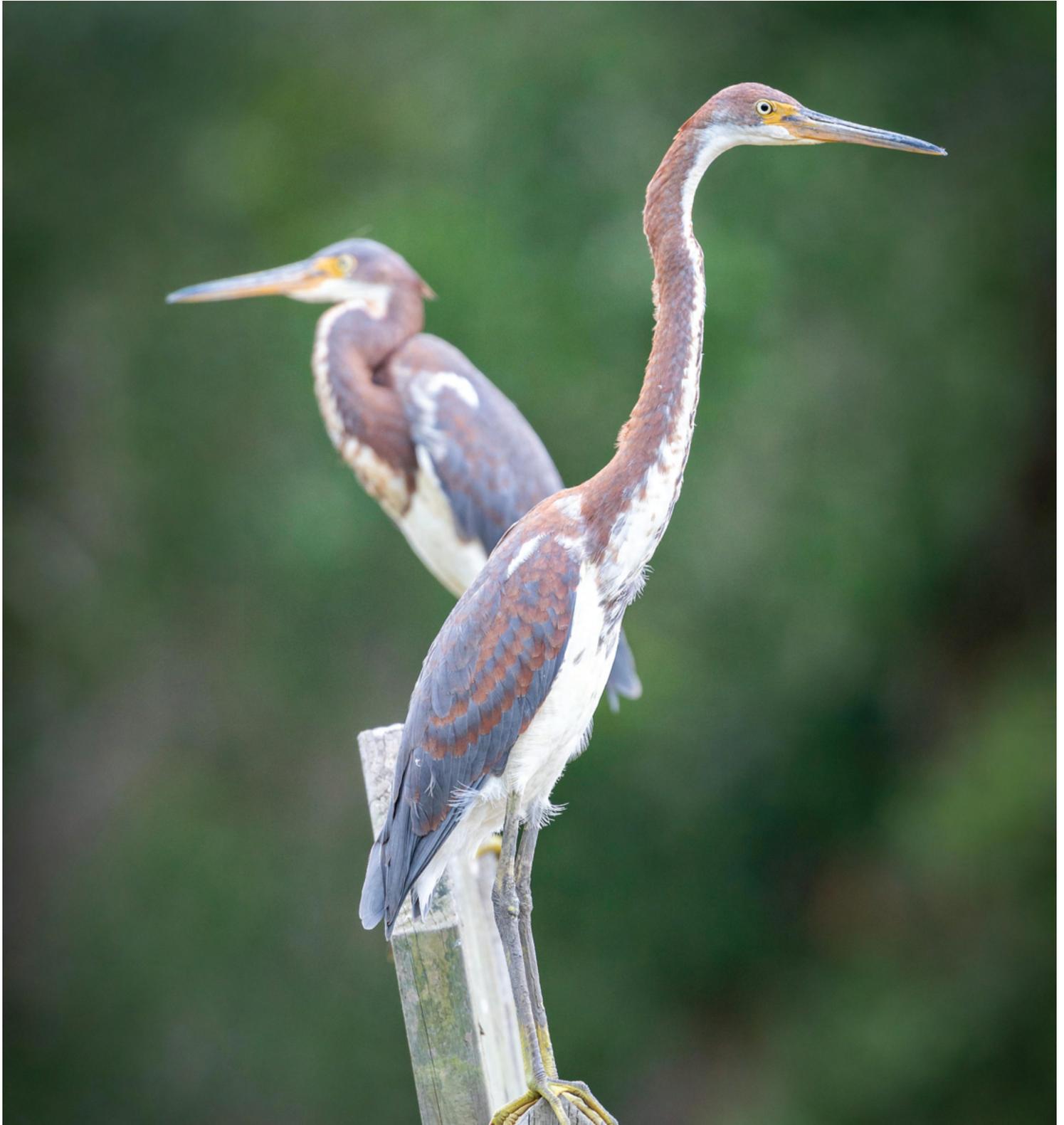




2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, RESEARCH & EDUCATION

*Leading scientific research to enhance understanding of wildlife and their habitats,  
and sharing this knowledge so we can all become better stewards of our natural resources.*



COVER JUVENILE TRICOLORED HERON BY ANDREW BRIDGES

INSIDE COVER JUVENILE EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE BY STEPHANIE BRASWELL

Photo by Jamie Koelker

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

Andrew S. Bridges, Ph.D.

In establishing the Nemours Wildlife Foundation, Eugene duPont III and his family left the Lowcountry and the world a tremendous legacy. Much indeed has been given to us. Through the spring, summer, and fall of 2022, I have had the great honor and pleasure of getting to know Nemours—its rich history, scientific accomplishments, breathtaking landscape, diverse collaborators, passionate staff, dedicated board of trustees, and generous donors. Nemours is a rare and special place, and through this Foundation, we have been given the opportunity to play a rare and special role in molding the future of conservation and in addressing important challenges at a historically pivotal juncture.

*“Let us remember that, as much has been given us; much will be expected from us, and that true homage comes from the heart as well as from the lips, and shows itself in deeds.”*

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Ecosystem health and function increasingly depend on the actions of people, and as we are increasingly aware, people depend on the actions of healthy and functional ecosystems. Nemours occupies a unique space on the conservation landscape. We have the capacity to conduct and support meaningful conservation research,

to demonstrate innovation in land management, and to build collaborative partnerships acting as force multipliers providing greater collective impact from these pursuits. But, and perhaps more importantly, we can help guide, mold, and build the next generation of young conservationists. Ultimately, Nemours’ greatest contribution will come from the women and men it produces and in facilitating their capacity to go forth into the world with better understanding and problem-solving skills to address conservation’s increasingly complex challenges.

I am blessed with a five-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter, and it is clear the decisions we, as a society, make today and the actions that we take tomorrow will have unprecedented power in defining the world my children and yours will inherit. While the challenges can feel overwhelming and intractable, we have opportunities to meet these challenges and develop robust and resilient solutions. Through Gene duPont’s vision, the generosity of his family, the support of Nemours’ donors, and the labors of those who first developed this venerated institution, much indeed has been given to us. As my tenure as steward of these gifts begins, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to those who built Nemours into the symbol of excellence it represents today, and am exhilarated at the enormous potential of the deeds we can accomplish in the years to come. *///*

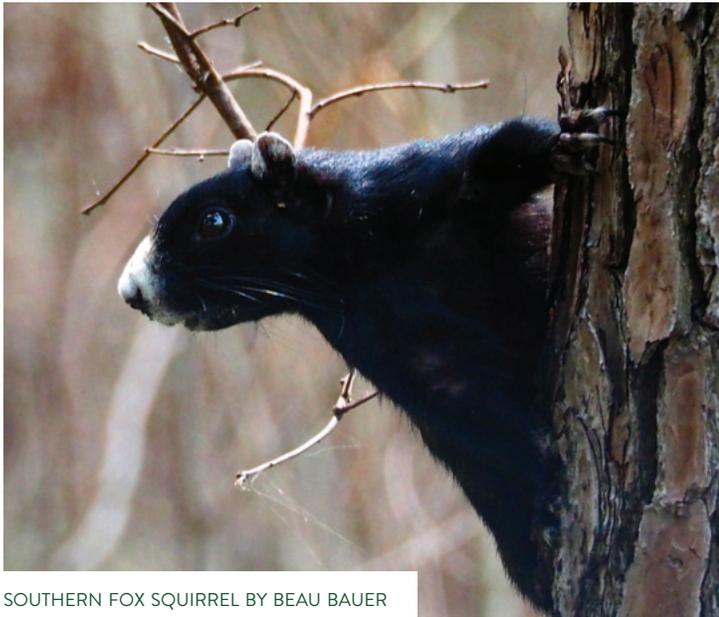


# A Living Legacy

BY EMILY DURSO



AMERICAN ALLIGATOR BY ANDREW BRIDGES



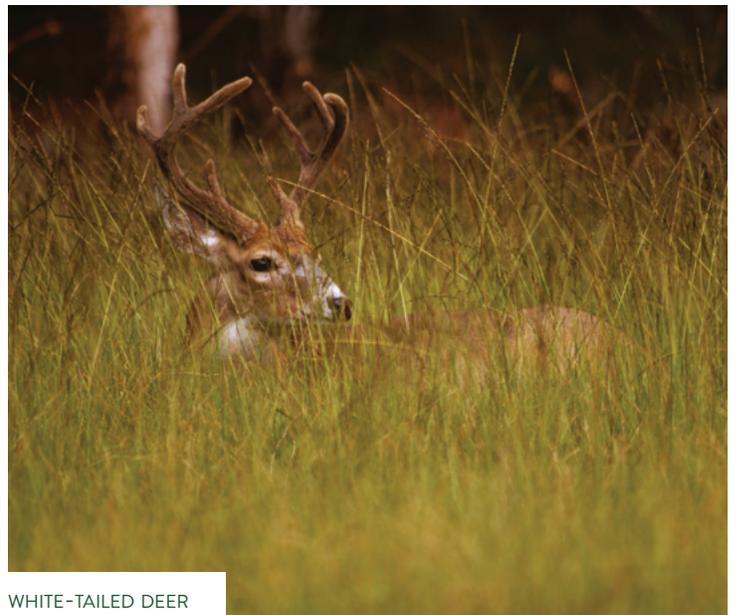
SOUTHERN FOX SQUIRREL BY BEAU BAUER



BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK EGGS BY GILLIE CROFT



ROSEATE SPOONBILL BY ANDREW BRIDGES



WHITE-TAILED DEER

Built on a foundation of generosity and the vision of Gene duPont.

Nurtured by the dedicated Board and Staff for over twenty years.

**Now poised with new direction and energy of the Board and new CEO Dr. Bridges,**

**Nemours is moving to a new level in conservation, research, and education.**

The nucleus of Nemours was Gene duPont's love of this special place and wanting to create a remarkable contribution to wildlife conservation and education and research. After meeting with the then Executive Director of the Welder Foundation, Gene duPont engaged Dr. Teer of Welder to help create a similar foundation for Nemours which formally became the Nemours Wildlife Foundation in August 1993.

The early years were a challenge trying to maintain nearly 10,000 acres and pursue innovative research with the primary income being the sale of timber and revenue from a few hunting leases. When Dr. Ernie Wiggers joined Nemours, relationships with Clemson, University of Georgia, University of South Carolina, and a highly rewarding stream of visiting interns and graduate students living on campus began. For the past 20 years, Nemours has been a leader in studying upland and wetland wildlife habitat in the ACE Basin, provided focus on waterfowl, bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkeys and American alligators as well as clapper rails, eastern diamondback rattlesnakes, southern fox squirrels, red-cockaded woodpeckers, and whooping cranes. Nemours has become a respected wildlife foundation and leader.

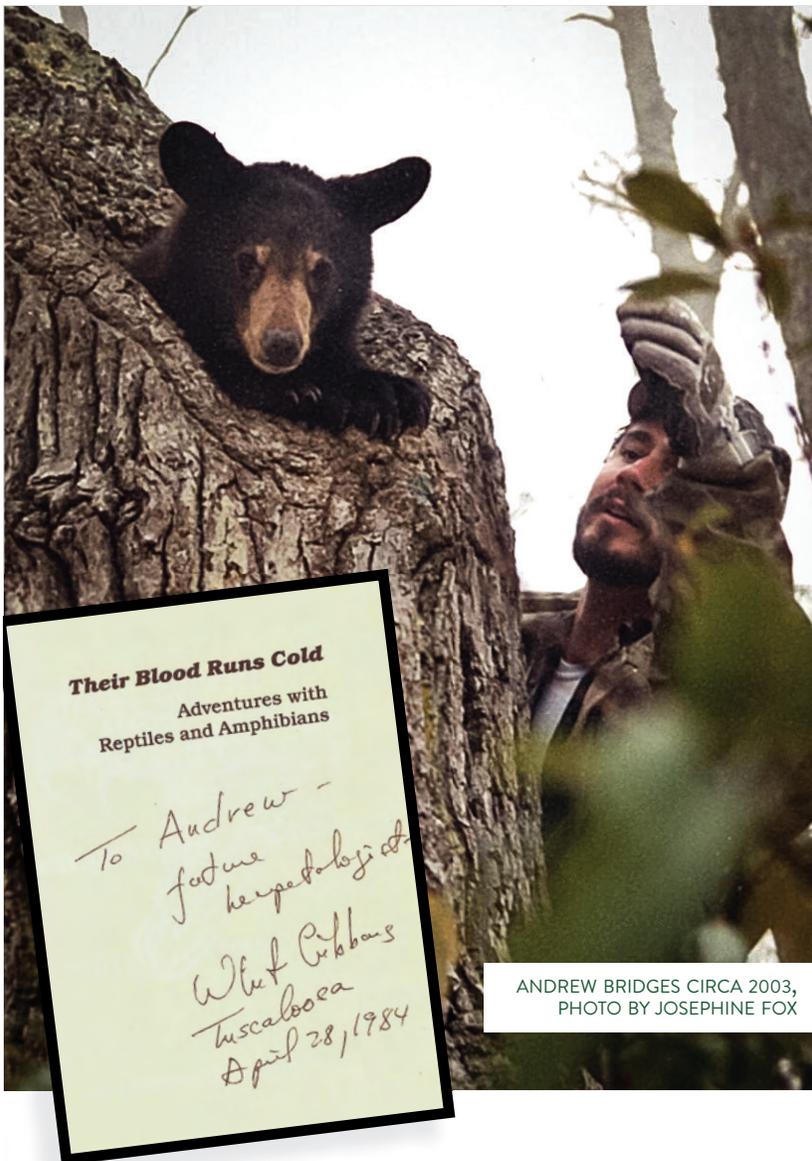
In 2007 the Friends of Nemours was founded to engage donor partners to help fund our interns, research projects, and participate in major grants to help further our goals of land stewardship and conservation for the future.

With our new CEO, highly qualified and committed staff, and Board of Directors, Nemours Wildlife Foundation will greatly expand its research and educational role engaging the public's appreciation for conservation and the future of the environment for our state, country, and the world. Our new Wiggers Laboratory and the duPont Classroom facilities are the beginning of a new era of Nemours being a leader in research and education on many new and exciting levels. *W*

# Welcoming Andrew

It was 1984 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama when the legendary South Carolina ecologist Dr. Whit Gibbons arrived on young Andrew Bridges' doorstep. The brief interaction, examining an elementary schooler's turtle collection and personally signing Andrew's copy of Gibbons' *Their Blood Runs Cold* fanned a flame, eventually resulting in a lifetime of professional conservation studies and work experience that span

six states in the public and private sectors, more than 50 technical reports, theses, and popular articles, and now an opportunity to lead one of the country's most special wildlife foundations. In April 2022 Dr. Bridges took the reins of Nemours Wildlife Foundation, only the second individual to serve as the Chief Executive Officer in the organization's 27-year history.



ANDREW BRIDGES CIRCA 2003,  
PHOTO BY JOSEPHINE FOX



THE BRIDGES CHILDREN  
ENJOYING THE LOWCOUNTRY

*“...we were seeking a leader who could blend intelligent curiosity, scientific wherewithal, humility and grace—someone who could embody the idea of being a good steward of the duPont legacy and help interpret what that legacy meant in this new context.”*

DAN SHERMAN

The nationwide search that brought Dr. Andrew Bridges to Nemours was set in motion by Chairman Mike McShane, son-in-law of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation’s founders, Eugene and Laura duPont. He saw the opportunity to leverage this change in leadership to not only honor his family’s legacy but to also use this 10,000-acre living laboratory to drive a scientific narrative, drawing from the unique opportunities presented at Nemours and developing solutions to the country’s emerging conservation challenges. “The Board of Directors is excited about the energy and talent that Dr. Bridges possesses and offers in a pivotal time for the Foundation as we embark on a new strategic plan focused on the conservation challenges today that we must address now,” commented Chairman of the Board, Mike McShane.

To lead the search effort, he enlisted the expertise of Dan Sherman, Founder and President of the Maryland-based Explore Company. His organization’s successful searches include leaders for the most notable conservation non-profits in the country—Ducks Unlimited, National

Audubon Society, National Wild Turkey Federation, and others. “In the search for Nemours’ new CEO, we were seeking a leader who could blend intelligent curiosity, scientific wherewithal, humility and grace—someone who could embody the idea of being a good steward of the duPont legacy and help interpret what that legacy meant in this new context.”

Dr. Andrew Bridges quickly rose to the top of the candidate pool. In addition to his extensive research background and ability to weave partners and strategy, Dr. Bridges was a Welder Fellow at the prestigious foundation that Mr. duPont used as a model in establishing Nemours. The same Dr. Jim Teer, who was a contemporary of duPont’s and mentor to McShane, also served as an important mentor to Dr. Bridges. It was almost as though Bridges had spent more than 20 years in training for his newest assignment.

Over the last six months, Dr. Bridges has been working to understand the property’s rich history and to build

relationships with staff, partners, and friends with an eye towards launching a strategic planning process with the board of directors this Fall. Additionally, one of the first partnerships that Dr. Bridges plans to codify is a relationship with Welder Wildlife Foundation, now led by Dr. Dale James, a Fellow at Welder during Dr. Bridges tenure in the late 1990s. The two envision a partnership that will foster professional development, offer learning in a variety of ecosystems, and serve to ignite that flame in others that Dr. Bridges experienced so long ago.

Reflecting on his lifelong journey, Dr. Bridges remarked, “I have always and will always love wildlife. My journey has been blessed with the inspiration of Dr. Gibbons, mentorship of Dr. Teer, friendship of Dr. James, and legacy of Mr. duPont. Whether good fortune, or fate, or perhaps divine intent, I know in my heart that I am where I was always meant to be, and I know without a doubt that the best is yet to come.”

*“[We’re] excited about our new CEO and his vision supporting the entire staff to improve our wildlife habitat which further improves Nemours biodiversity”.*

BEAU BAUER

Wood Duck Study. Photo by Jacob Shurba



# From the Field



**BEAU BAUER**  
Staff Biologist

This past year marked the third year of our wood duck project examining the contribution of nest boxes to wood duck recruitment in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic United States. Nemours coordinates this study in collaboration with Clemson University's James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center; Louisiana State University; Mississippi State University; University of Delaware; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Delaware Wild Lands; and state wildlife agencies representing Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Three graduate students working on this study successfully completed their Masters' theses this spring (Emily Miller and Jacob Shurba [Clemson University] and Taylor Gibson [Mississippi State University]). We welcomed new graduate students, Hunter Mentges (Mississippi State University) and Blake Struthers (University of Delaware) this year. Additionally, Dylan Bakner (Ph.D. candidate, Louisiana State University) is expected to complete his dissertation by summer 2023 and will subsequently conduct the final regional analysis beginning fall 2023.

Our close partnership with Clemson's James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center and director, Dr. Jim Anderson, also continues with a new Nemours-supported graduate student, Cindy von Haugg. A seasoned

wood duck technician, Cindy, began a companion study to the regional nest box relating to natural cavity availability and suitability for wood duck nesting. We also welcomed back Stephen Clements (Ph.D. student, Mississippi State University) as he begins his second field season investigating wintering waterfowl foraging habitats in South Atlantic coastal wetlands. Stephen is sampling a diverse array of managed wetlands for food resources (i.e., seeds, invertebrates, etc.) to estimate the availability of these forages in addition to using state-of-the-art DNA techniques to determine the diet of wintering waterfowl within these habitats.

Lastly, our remarkable 10,000 property never ceases to amaze. After two years of searching, we added a new plant species to our botanical inventory, Carolina Bishopweed (*Ptilimnium ablesii*). This rare and inconspicuous plant inhabits a narrow ecological niche within tidal freshwater zones. This was also a banner year for our endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers with three of four successful nest attempts yielding seven new fledglings! We thank our partners with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Longleaf Alliance for their efforts in establishing this population at Nemours. These discoveries highlight not only the biodiversity of the Lowcountry and ACE Basin; but, also are a testament to our stewardship staff whose dedicated work is evident by the 236 bird and 589 plant species documented at the Nemours Wildlife Foundation.

*We extend our deepest sympathies to the friends and family of Susan Accettullo. Susan had begun graduate research at Nemours through a partnership with Clemson's James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center. She passed October 15, 2022.*

SKETCHES



Wood Duck



Canvasback



Red Cockaded Woodpecker

Great Blue Skimmer



**HEATHER KRAUS**  
*Education & Outreach Coordinator*

This year my work has revolved around two new projects. MAPS - Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship is a continent-wide effort through the Institute for Bird Populations. Participants from across North America capture birds throughout the summer using fine mesh nets, band them with aluminum leg bands, and collect information about the birds' age, sex, and condition. Following a standardized protocol allows individual MAPS stations to support research to estimate population trends of birds nesting in different habitats and the stages during a bird's life that affect population growth.

Locally, the data provides insight into the birds using Nemours during the nesting season: our population, survival from year to year, and the ratio of adults to young.

Nemours is one of only four sites in South Carolina that are federally permitted to do this work.

The second project is Motus. Latin for "Movement," Motus is a way



**ROBERT KITLER**  
*Plantation Manager*

We're really close to our goal with our rice fields under proper management, in the conditions we have wanted them to be for many years. This means we can move on to new work in the uplands for constructive work in new rice fields adding to new areas for Nemours stewardship of the land to support our research and conservation goals. And also affecting, in a positive way, the general public's ideas about how to manage rice fields to be more supportive of wildlife. ~~///~~



PHOTO BY PETE LAURIE

**JUSTIN RICKENBAKER**  
*Plantation Manager*

Pretty excited about the ponds and impoundments, thanks to the work we've been doing for a long time they are looking good and are better able to support more duck and waterfowl. For the first time in our memory we now have salinity in the river which means we have a different more productive approach to our overall management of the impoundments.

I just don't know how many families and young people we hosted [in partnership with Outdoor Dream

Foundation] this year for fishing and gator hunts. It might be 30-40 families and who knows how many children getting exposed to nature and conservation and what land stewardship means and looks like. 

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*“Working here is a never ending song, we are constantly asking questions about the property, what Nemours is and what we want Nemours to be even for those of us who have been here over 20 years.”*

ROBERT AND JUSTIN

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## **BUBBA ERWIN**

*Plantation Manager*

Duck hunting is a great way to enjoy and expose all the land management work that has been happening on Nemours. It is, for me, a great opportunity to share this place with our guests and answer any and all questions they have not just about the hunt but about the abundance and special nature of Nemours. The day we end one duck season we immediately start planning for the next so we make it an exceptional experience.

It's a special kind of person to do this work. Even just organizing a hunt takes a great deal of care and planning because when it works, when people ask where we work, who owns this property, what goes on here? We all have to explain it is a *totally* unique situation, its a group of people all working to steward this land and to support the conservation of a unique place. We are all working toward the same unique and very worthwhile goal.”people really enjoy, whether it is duck, turkey or deer, when it works it is just amazing thing to see. 

*Painted Buntings by Jacob Shurba*



*White-eyed Vireo by Jacob Shurba*



to track the movement of birds, bats, butterflies, and dragonflies during migration. Project participants from across the globe host tracking stations with antennas to detect lightweight transmitters the animals are wearing as they pass within range of a station. Currently, 18 tracking stations exist at our state's college campuses, state agencies, public schools, and even a Dominion Energy facility. Nemours has one station on property, and we are expanding our network with five more stations through a generous grant from Dominion Energy. These additional stations fill-in coverage gaps, creating a line from Charleston to Columbia and Spartanburg.

By building this tracking infrastructure in South Carolina we can join with partners such as DNR and SC Audubon on research projects addressing migration patterns of small aerial flyers. To follow our Nemours Motus station visit [motus.org](https://www.motus.org), find Nemours on the Motus network map, and click on our station. You can see all the species detected on our property. 

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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*Chairman*  
Johns Island, SC



**COLDEN R. BATTEY, JR.**  
*Board Member*  
Beaufort, SC



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*Vice Chairman*  
Beaufort, SC



**LINDA A. DEMMER**  
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Green Pond, SC  
and Harbor Springs, MI



**ALEX SHUFORD**  
*Secretary/Treasurer*  
Beaufort, SC



**KEVIN DUKES**  
*Board Member*  
Beaufort, SC



**JOHNNY WILLIAMSON III**  
*Board Member*  
Denmark, SC

## COLLABORATORS





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