

# Wings

Newsletter for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges Vol. XI No. 1 October, 2004

## Wings Over Water Flies into the Outer Banks

Wings Over Water is an annual nature festival that draws visitors from all over the country to experience the unique landscape, beaches, dunes, marshes, swamps and inland forests of the Outer Banks, while also participating in their choice of more than 100 different birding, natural history, outdoor recreation or paddling programs. This year's event is scheduled for **November 2-7**.

The 27-page registration booklet for the 2004 Wings Over Water is available by contacting the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce at 252-441-8144. For more information, visit [www.wingsoverwater.org](http://www.wingsoverwater.org).

"Like past celebrations, we have new exciting events to entertain even the most seasoned Wings Over Water participants," said Angie Brady-Daniels, Vice-President of Public Relations at the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce. "With programs like *The Maze Kayak*, the *Scuppernong River Pontoon Boat Tour*, *Ghost Town Birding on Portsmouth Island* and the new *Drive Back in History*, participants are sure to get their fill of great wildlife experiences and a taste of culture in the process. Whether you're a wildlife novice or a serious naturalist, these are simply wonderful opportunities."

This off-season event is sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, the National Park Service, Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society and the Carolina Bird Club, along with generous support from a number of local clubs, councils, and businesses.

### Important Dates to Remember!!!

**November 20, 2004** 4:30 pm at the Dunes Restaurant - **Annual Volunteer Awards Banquet**. All refuge volunteers and staff are invited. Please RSVP to Anicia Martinez at 252-473-1131 ext 221.

**December 9, 2004** 1:00 pm at the upstairs Conference Room of the USFWS office in Manteo- **Annual Membership Meeting** of Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society. If you are a member or wish to become a member, please plan to attend!

## Local Refuges and Partners Track Pintail Migration – Follow Those Birds!

Working with representatives from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) and United States Geological Survey (USGS), U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologists trapped several Northern Pintails at Pea Island, Mattamuskeet, and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuges late last winter. Ten healthy female pintails were selected and outfitted with lightweight transmitters attached with body harnesses, like backpacks. These transmitters send signals to satellites, which relay information every six days to researchers and biologists. The project also tracks pintails from Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida.

"Following the movement of these birds will allow us a better overall understanding of the dynamics of our winter population," explained Dennis Stewart, wildlife biologist at Alligator River and Pea Island Refuges. "We'll discover the path they take from the wintering grounds to their breeding grounds farther north - and back again - as well as information on nesting success and sources of mortality."

Although pintails are historically one of the most numerous wintering species on North Carolina's coast, their numbers have been decreasing. Nationwide, pintail harvest strategies are based on information drawn from the central and western populations, where the majority of pintails are found. Results of the tracking project could lead to regulations and management practices that are better suited to this region's wintering pintails.

"The satellite data will enable us to improve our management of pintails," Stewart continued. "It's been exciting to cooperate with state and federal agencies on this, when we work together, we can accomplish a lot more than working alone."

The NCWRC is providing updated information on the pintail project at their website, [www.ncwildlife.com/index.htm](http://www.ncwildlife.com/index.htm). Follow the link to Wildlife Species and Conservation, subtopic "species" and then "Satellite Tracking of Northern Pintails". Maps and information are available to track the pintails migration. Pintail #44681 from Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was tracked to Northern Quebec! The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has also posted maps from all six states involved in the project at [www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/pintails/afcpproject.html](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/pintails/afcpproject.html).

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## National Awards Earned by Locals!

Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Wildlife Interpretive Specialist since 1980, received the American Recreation Coalition's Legends for her work with conceiving and leading Wings Over Water. The Legends Award, presented during Great Outdoors Week, honors outstanding federal employees for significant contributions to enhancement of the nation's outdoor recreation resources, facilities and experiences, especially on public lands.

Mike Bryant, Refuge Manager for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, was selected by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as the 2004 winner of the Paul Kroegel Award for Refuge Manager of the Year. Bryant received numerous nominations for the award, including several present and past staff and refuge volunteers, members of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, and representatives of local, state, and national conservation agencies and organizations. Established to recognize outstanding accomplishment in the protection and management of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Paul Kroegel award honors the first manager of Pelican Island, the first national wildlife refuge established in 1903. Kroegel's dedication and effectiveness set a high standard for those who followed.

The North Carolina Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society recognized the contributions of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society and Refuge Manager Mike Bryant at its annual banquet on January 4, 2004. The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society received the Chapter's Merit Award, which recognize the Society's contributions to the programs at Pea Island, Alligator River, Mackay Island and Currituck National Wildlife Refuges. The Society raises funds, recruits and coordinates volunteers for bird walks and sea turtle programs, provides educational materials, and supported the construction and volunteer staffing of a visitor center at Pea Island Refuge.

The Chapter also cited Refuge Manager Mike Bryant with the Natural Resource Enhancement Award. They praised Mike for his management of a diverse and complex program on the refuges. The Society also recognized his leadership with interagency efforts to manage the public infrastructure around Pea Island Refuge while maintaining the Fish and Wildlife Service's mission and the Refuge's original purposes for establishment. The Soil and Water Conservation Society is an organization of professional conservationists dedicated to the conservation of soil, water, and other natural resources.

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## Public Use Survey on Eight Local Refuges

The year-long public use survey, planned more than a year ago, has officially begun. Volunteers will be conducting these surveys on Alligator River, Back Bay, Great Dismal Swamp, Mackay Island, Mattamuskeet, Pea Island, and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuges. Stay tuned for the results!

## Red Wolf Update

This spring brought a record number of red wolf pups to the wilds of northeastern North Carolina. Biologists with the USFWS Red Wolf Recovery Program found 55 red wolf pups in 11 litters and added two more pups to the count, via fostering, when a pair of female red wolf pups was transferred from a captive facility on Bulls Island at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina, to the wild red wolf population in northeastern North Carolina. Just two weeks old, the sister pups were selected for their rare genes and placed in separate dens with wild red wolf pups of identical age. The captive-born sisters were adopted by wild foster mothers and will likely be raised within their respective packs.

Captive-to-wild fostering events are a new method which allows genetically valuable captive-born red wolf pups to become integrated into the wild red wolf population. The pups develop in the wild, so that they gain survival skills required to mature and reproduce.

The Red Wolf Recovery Program was also able to measure the success of a previous fostering attempt that took place in 2002. Two years ago, a bold experiment placed two pups from the North Carolina Zoological Park into a wild den containing two pups of identical age. The male and female pups were successfully adopted by their wild foster mother and raised within the pack. During the following spring of 2003, the two captive-born yearlings remained with their adopted pack and helped raise a new litter of pups. This spring, biologists were hopeful that each of the zoo-born red wolves would produce litters of their own.

The male zoo-born wolf, displaced from his adopted pack and forced to establish a range of his own, was successful in securing the alpha position of another established pack, just in time for breeding season. Biologists are celebrating the discovery of a litter of eight puppies that were fathered by the zoo-born male.

In mid-April, a telemetry intern detected a mortality signal from the zoo-born female's radio tracking collar. When the female's body was recovered, all symptoms pointed to complications with pregnancy. "We are saddened at the loss, but are encouraged by her ability to adapt successfully to the wild before dying of natural causes," comments Buddy Fazio, Team Leader of the Red Wolf Recovery Program.

The red wolf, a species that was on the brink of extinction, now roams 1.5 million acres in northeastern North Carolina. Over 100 red wolves comprise the world's only wild population of this endangered canid. An intensive captive breeding program, involving 36 zoos and captive facilities, manages 154 captive red wolves, including 14 newly-born pups. The Red Wolf Recovery Program is conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the authority of the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973.

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## Biological Program

### Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

· The black bear project completed data collection in mid-August. Over 1,800 hair samples were collected from baited, barbed-wire corrals. Genetic analyses will be done on hair samples and, from the number of "capture/recaptures," a reasonably accurate population estimate will be developed.

· A contract has been awarded to assess the current status of red-cockaded woodpecker cavity trees. Trails to known cavity trees have been impassable since Hurricane Isabel. The contractor will use a helicopter to complete the hurricane damage assessment with regards to known cavity trees. Locations for any new cavity trees will be recorded during the survey.

· Amphibian monitoring for contaminant assessment continued this year. Results have been sporadic due to the selection of sample sites and alternating wet/dry/wet weather.

### Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

· 322 least tern and 6 common tern nests were documented on the refuge this summer. Although total fledglings is unknown, the birds had a very successful nesting season. American oystercatchers have had a successful nesting season this year with 8-12 chicks.

· Turtle Patrol season is over and Turtle Watch time is upon us. The season was extremely slow with 7 false crawls and one nest (believed to be a Green sea turtle) that was relocated to the safety zone. Turtle Watch will continue through incubation day 80 or until the nest hatches.

· Much effort has gone into ATV training for staff, interns, and volunteers involved with the Turtle Program. To date, 51 participants have attended 9 training sessions. All training has been conducted to the ATV Safety Institute's Rider Course standards.

· Impoundment water management was timed to provide optimum habitat for spring and fall shorebird migration. Numbers peaked in late May at 13,806 total birds. The most abundant species was the semi-palmated sandpiper at approximately 6,400. As of this writing, fall migration is still underway.

· Dredging at Oregon Inlet with disposal on the Refuge beach will begin in September. Based upon current information, 400,000 - 600,000 cubic yards of sand may be dredged.

· The N. C. Department of Transportation completed sprigging American beach grass and sea oats on the dunes constructed during the post-Isabel recovery period. Sand fencing is being used to further stabilize some of these dunes.

In memory of Adele Mathers Gould, a donation was made to the Pea Island Visitor Center by her heirs and family.

## A Note of Apology...

If you've been on the refuge mailing list for a while, you've probably noticed that the newsletter has not been arriving at expected intervals. Wings was originally established as a quarterly newsletter. For the past two years, it has been published only once each year.

CWRS has been gracious in contributing funds to cover the costs of printing and mailing. Staff time has been the primary limiting factor with having the newsletter printed regularly. It is our hope that the 2005 calendar year will see Wings back on schedule. Thanks for your patience.

If there are items we have missed that you would like to see in one of the next editions, please remind us by calling 252-473-1131 ext 230 or sending your comments to [bonnie\\_strawser@fws.gov](mailto:bonnie_strawser@fws.gov).

## New Workamper Opportunities - Thanks to CWRS!!

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge has a new facility designed with volunteers in mind. Dubbed the "Volunteer Pod", the refuge has constructed a site with pads and hook-ups for RV's. The site, located near the intern housing on Buffalo City Road, will also offer a small cabin with shower and laundry facilities, a tv/dvd player/vcr, and a computer with internet access. The cabin will serve as a "common area" to be used by workampers and interns. Except for basic site work (hauling and grading fill and gravel), the facility has been funded 100% by the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society. We plan to have the "Volunteer Pod" operational by January, 2005.

Special thanks to the Alligator River maintenance crew for their support and hard work in getting this project accomplished!



### Board of Directors

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### Helping the Refuge through CWRS

Please check the second line of your *Wings* mailing label membership renewal information. If you've joined the Society, it will list the **month/year that you last paid your dues**. By keeping your membership current, you're helping the Society pay for important Refuge work. Any donation (\$10, \$50, or any amount over!!) helps! Mail membership dues /donations to CWRS, PO Box 1808, Manteo, NC 27954.

**Sixty Second Interview- Landon Loveall** (Student Cooperative Education Program) served one coop session with Pea Island and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges this summer.

**What is your educational background?**

I am currently enrolled as a Natural Resources Management major with a concentration in Wildlife Biology at the University of Tennessee at Martin with an expected graduation date of May 2005.

**How long have you been with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and where?**

This is my second summer working with the Fish & Wildlife Service. Previously, I worked at Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge in Paris, TN, as part of the Student Temporary Experience Program (STEP). This summer I am working here at Alligator River NWR as a participant in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

**What is SCEP?**

SCEP is a program for current students which the US Fish & Wildlife Service uses to recruit future employees. To fulfill the requirements of SCEP, I work 640 hours during the summers while pursuing my degree.

**After completing SCEP, where will you go?**

I will start off my permanent USFWS career either here at Alligator River Refuge or on another refuge as an Assistant Refuge Manager.

**Where do you live?**

I'm from Portland, Tennessee. It is a small, rural town located an hour north of Nashville, TN. My father, mother and little sister live there in a house with 10 acres where we raise sheep.

**What are your professional goals?**

After completing my SCEP hours and graduating in May, I plan to move into an Assistant Refuge Manager position on a refuge in the Southeast region. From there, I will transfer every 2-4 years until I become a Refuge Manager. I would eventually like to work on a refuge in one of the western states - particularly Colorado.

**Do you have any hobbies?**

I enjoy any and all outdoor activities. I've had a lot of fun this summer getting to fish and spend time on the beach here at the Outer Banks. I also enjoy sports such as basketball and participating in a physical fitness program.

**Have you ever been to the Outer Banks before?**

No, this summer is my first experience with the Outer Banks, which adds another dimension to my SCEP experience. I've had a wonderful time so far, and I love the area. Everyone in the area has been very friendly and welcoming.



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