

# Wings

Newsletter for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges

Vol. XII No. 1 February, 2005

## Fly into Spring Wings!

May 12-15, 2005



As the wildlife awakens after a cold and harsh winter in eastern North Carolina, expert naturalists will be gathering to take people afield in search of spring wildflowers, songbirds feeding young, and newly-emerged butterflies. The first annual Spring Wings Over

Water festival will expose participants to wildlife, and the awakening natural world, during the lively breeding and nesting season. Who could resist the beautiful songs of the Prothonotary Warbler, the Indigo Bunting, and the Ovenbird (just to name a few)?

“The spring season offers so many unique opportunities to explore wildlife and their habitats, we just had to add a Spring Wings!” says Ann Marie Salewski, the Wings Over Water coordinator. “The weekend festival is just long enough to provide participants a spring complement to the fall Wings Over Water event.” The program schedule offers spring counterparts to the traditional WOW field trips- such as the North and South Pond trips- along with some exciting new offerings.

There are *many* new additions to the spring line-up, including Ocracoke Wildflowers, a Bird Photography workshop, and Pelagic Birding Trips. Many offerings, like wildflower and butterfly trips, simply aren't possible in the fall. Spring birding trips will also offer courtship observation, and breeding bird song identification opportunities.

Come be a part of this exciting event! Registration and more information for the first annual Spring Wings can be found through the main web site [www.wingsoverwater.com](http://www.wingsoverwater.com) or by calling the Chamber of Commerce at (252) 441-8144.

## Join the CWRS Friend's Work Team

Local volunteers and members of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society are getting organized... and really getting things done! Join in the effort!!! Contact Susie Ahlfeld (252-987-1118 or [susan\\_ahlfeld@fws.gov](mailto:susan_ahlfeld@fws.gov)) or Tom White, Jr. (252-473-3512 or [thomaslwhite@earthlink.net](mailto:thomaslwhite@earthlink.net)).

Monthly meetings to coordinate work projects are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm in the upstairs Conference Room of the FWS Office in Manteo (708 N Hwy 64).



Prothonotary Warbler (FWS)

## Attention!!

Due to the high cost of postage and the shrinking budgets of the refuges, beginning with the next issue, Wings will be mailed ONLY to current members of the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society for whom we do not have email addresses. However, we would love to provide you with the newsletter electronically. PLEASE send your email address to [susan\\_ahlfeld@fws.gov](mailto:susan_ahlfeld@fws.gov) so you can be put on the email list to receive the newsletter! Or, if you would like to continue to receive a hard copy, please join or renew your membership to CWRS! Questions: 252-987-1118

## Fire Updates

Firefighters from NC Refuges successfully completed a very difficult pocosin burn behind the homes on Lola Road at Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge in November. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge loaned us their helicopter, and Cherry Point Forestry personnel and Marget Bucher from the Nature Conservancy assisted to make it an interagency cooperative burn. This burn has been the top priority wildland urban interface area in North Carolina requiring fuels reduction through prescribed burning for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and has been the most difficult area to burn. The combination of fuels and wetland conditions required that the burn be conducted when the ground conditions were drier than normal, but not so dry that the organic soils and duff would become fully involved and burn. The logistics of hauling equipment and personnel down to this remote refuge located at the north end of the Carteret County peninsula (5 hours travel time from Alligator River Refuge) made this burn even more challenging. We have burned approximately 9,000 acres of this 16,000 acre refuge over the past five years, and this burn really meant a lot to the interagency firefighters in North Carolina. Now we can rest easy in the knowledge that these homes on Lola Road are a lot safer from wildland fires that have threatened them so often over the years.

Conditions this past fall at Alligator River Refuge became too dry to burn just before Thanksgiving, causing the staff to wait until after receiving adequate rainfall to thoroughly dampen the soil and duff conditions. Fire Management staff had great difficulty in obtaining helicopters for aerial ignition, further delaying the burning program until after the New Year. Plans are to burn approximately 8,000 to 15,000 acres between now and March if all goes well. One burn will have 10 researchers from four agencies involved in studying smoke plumes, fuels, and fire behavior and involves both Alligator River Refuge lands and Dare County Bombing Range lands that are managed by Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Research from this burn will greatly enhance our understanding of fire effects and smoke emissions from prescribed burns from pocosin and other wetland shrub/timber fuels across the southeastern United States.



Note the large smoke plume behind this residence on Lola Road.  
Credit: Tom Crews, USFWS

## Volunteer Update

- Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges are currently recruiting workamper volunteers for 2005 and 2006. The workamper pads at Alligator River are complete (thanks Bill Slayton!) and our first workampers arrived at the end of January.

- The volunteer awards banquet was held in November at the Dune Restaurant in Nags Head. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have donated their time and expertise to make the refuges better places. Ruth Polnisch received the Volunteer of the Year for 2004 and the award for Highest Gross Sales Day for 2004. Congratulations Ruth!!

- Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is looking for volunteers to work at the visitor center information desk one day a week. This job would include: representing the refuges, answering visitor questions, and running the book store. Volunteers should be outgoing and willing to spend a day at Pea Island!! If you are interested, please call Susie Ahlfeld at 252-987-1118.

- The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society is becoming more active in 2005. The refuges have asked the Society to coordinate volunteer groups to accomplish many projects throughout the two refuges. If you are interested in hearing more about these projects and getting involved, call Susie at 252-987-1118 or Society President Tom White at 252-473-3512.

- April 17-23, 2005 is National Volunteer Week!! Thanks to all of our volunteers for the support you give us.

## Biological Updates

Christmas Bird Counts were completed at Pea Island and Alligator River. The Christmas Bird Count is an early-winter census of all bird species found within a 15-radius on a specific day. The Christmas Bird Count was first done on December 25, 1900 by Frank Chapman, famed ornithologist of the American Museum of Natural History. This national census is administered by the National Audubon Society.

Unusual bird sightings: 5 Common Eiders have been spotted off the North end of Pea Island; White-fronted Goose in the Creef Unit at Alligator River; Black-necked Stilt in the Twiford Unit at Alligator River; Purple Sandpipers at the North end of Pea Island; Razorbill spotted offshore at the North end of Pea Island.

Staff will be participating in the Chesapeake Bay Northern Pintail Project for the second year in a row. Pintails will be trapped and tagged with satellite transmitters at Pea Island this February. This is in a continuing effort to develop proper management techniques for the eastern population of this waterfowl species.

Refuge biological intern Emily Weiser has developed a passerine survey in the shrub habitat west of the impoundments at Pea Island. This project will provide an initial assessment of the overwintering passerines. In the future, this project may be expanded to include surveying throughout the year.

## Wildlife Photography

### 90% Seeing, 10% Photographing

Photography is a priority public use on national wildlife refuges and a very popular activity at Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges. Here are a few tips to help you in the field.

**1. Use Your Zoom** (*Don't scare away animals - use your digital camera's optical zoom to record detail.*)

**Respect wildlife!!** Keep a safe distance between you and the animal.

**2. Snap Quickly and Often** (*Snap plenty of digital photos to compensate for random animal movements.*)

When a safe photo opportunity presents itself, get a focus and exposure lock on the animal and snap quickly and often.

**3. Show Some Patience** (*The best things come to those who wait.*)

If you are committed to getting a great photograph in the wild, bring your equipment, set up your shot, and expect to wait. Also, expect to move at a moment's notice in case a new photograph opportunity presents itself.

**4. Use a Fast Shutter Speed** (*Compensate for fast animal movements with your digital camera settings.*)

Capturing a soaring bird is an incredible moment, but a shutter speed of 1/30 of a second will probably ruin the image, turning a graceful flight into an unsightly blur.

**5. Obey the Don't Feed the Animals Signs** (*For your personal safety and others, never feed the wildlife!*)

Feeding animals is dangerous both to you and to the animal. Fed animals become accustomed to humans doling out food, thus they lose their fear of humans and tend to wander towards populated areas.

**6. Avoid Flash** (*Avoid flash with your digital camera whenever possible to keep animals from getting startled.*)

Not only is there a potential for red-eye, but also worse, your flash unit could startle an animal.

**7. Disable All Camera Sounds** (*Even the slightest beep produced by your digital camera may scare away wildlife.*)

While these sounds are normally fairly quiet, note that an animal's sense of hearing may be much more developed than ours and any small noise created by a digital camera may be enough to startle an animal in the wild.

**8. Consider a Compact Camera** (*A smaller digital camera may make it easier to take photos in the wild.*)

Small digital cameras are less likely to intimidate animals and are much easier to carry if you have to travel a long distance by foot.

These tips are excerpts from an article found at [http://malektips.com/digital\\_wildlife\\_and\\_animal\\_photography\\_help\\_and\\_tips.html](http://malektips.com/digital_wildlife_and_animal_photography_help_and_tips.html).

## Donors – Since November, 2004

(We plan to run a quarterly update on donors...)

Karen Hudgins and Rhonda Wilkins, of Sea Technology LTD (In memory of McClanahan Ingles II). For Mr. and Mrs. McClanahan Ingles and Children.

## Did You Know?

Hatteras Island and the Outer Banks have some interesting "place names." The name Pea Island was originally applied to a small island in the Pamlico Sound. The name was taken from the wild peas which grew in abundance there and furnished food for the migrating birds and waterfowl. Later the name transferred to the barrier island from New Inlet to Oregon Inlet. Even though New Inlet last closed in 1945, the names New Inlet and Pea Island continue to be used today.

Some people believe Alligator River was named for the alligators found there. But if you look at Alligator River on a map of North Carolina, you'll find it is shaped similar to this reptile, which also inhabits it's waters.

Pamlico Sound was named for the Pamlico Indians who lived on its shores. The Pamlico Sound is a shallow, 2,000-mile estuary, second in size only to the Chesapeake Bay. Like Pamlico Sound, Hatteras was also named for an Indian tribe, the Hatteras Indians. Dare County was named for Virginia Dare, the first English child born in America.

Avon was originally named Kinnakeet but the post office changed the name to Avon due to confusion over the spelling of Kinnakeet. The name Avon was very likely selected for the river of that same name in England.

The village of Salvo was originally named Clarks, but the name did not appear on maps or charts. During the Civil War, the commander of one of the Union vessels inquired the name of the village they were passing and was told there was no name on the chart for it. His reply was "give it a salvo (simultaneous firing of cannon) anyway." So Salvo was entered on the chart. That name was gradually entered on other maps, etc. and in 1901 the post office made that the name of the post office and thus the community.

Rodanthe was named by the post office because the original name "Chicamacomico" was too difficult to spell and pronounce. It is located at the easternmost point in North Carolina.

The Oregon Inlet opened during a hurricane in 1846. It was named for the first vessel to pass through it, the side-wheeler "Oregon."



## Board Of Directors

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30 second interview – Ruth Polnisch “2004 Volunteer of the Year”

1. When did you start volunteering at the refuge Visitor Center?

*How many birds do I have on the window? (Each volunteer receives a stained glass bird custom made by a local artist at the annual awards banquet) Could 2005 be my 9<sup>th</sup> year!!*

2. What do you enjoy most about working at the Visitor Center?

*I enjoy working with the visitors and answering their questions, and of course, the people I work with!*

It’s not the t-shirts and the jewelry? *No way, I have to buy that stuff!!*

4. What do you do in your free time besides volunteering for the refuges?

*In my free time, I like to play bridge with my friends. I also enjoy going out to eat. In addition to volunteering for the refuge, I also volunteer at Festival Park at their visitor center and the Aquarium working at the touch tank.*

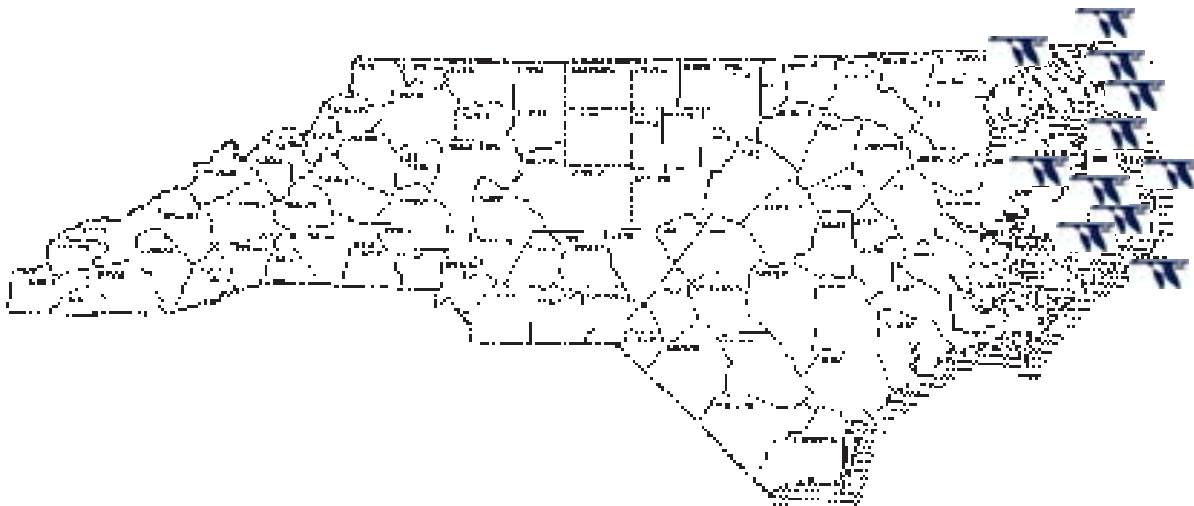


**Ruth Polnisch receives Refuge “Volunteer of the Year” Award from Manager Mike Bryant at the November Volunteer Awards Banquet**



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