



A big 'Thank You!' from Susan Campbell:

As most of you know by now, the spring meeting of the Carolina Bird Club was a big success here in Southern Pines. This was due in large part to the enthusiasm and support by a number of local folks, many of whom are SNHS members. Our local speakers, Todd Pusser and Jeff Marcus, gave wonderful presentations. Field trip leaders included Brady Beck, Carol Bowman, Kerry Brust, Ryan Elting, Beth Evans, Scott Hartley, Alicia Jackson, David McCloy, Michael McCloy, Jeff Marcus, Susan Miller, Alan Schultz, Patrick Shaffner, and Terry Sharpe. Our reception coordinators, Carol Bowman, Linda Jones, along with the countless number of people who brought food donations, made Friday afternoon at Weymouth Woods very memorable. Also at the reception, we had a wonderful photo display by Brady Beck, Beth Evans, Michael McCloy and Frank Ripp. The Kilpatricks did a great job manning our merchandise table in the evening at the hotel too. Furthermore, we are also very grateful to Jill Mc Cloy for her help with advertising. Several local folks participated as a result of her fantastic newspaper articles. And of course, the t-shirt courtesy of Hal Broadfoot was another highlight. And last but not least, we need to acknowledge the group of members that assisted with stuffing the meeting packets before the meeting got underway. They include Brady Beck, Carol Bowman, Betty Clemens, Linda Jones, Nancy and David Kilpatrick, Bridgett Ladd, Marjorie Ludwig, and Susan and Lowell Strine. Great job everybody!

(Many thanks to Susan for her efforts coordinating the event! Brady)

2008 Meetings

Monday, July 28

Pot Luck and Show & Tell. Bring your favorite dish to share for a social hour. Also bring a photo, natural history quiz, etc. to share with the group.

Monday, August 25

Erin Hewett - New Red-cockaded Woodpecker Research Update. Just when you thought you knew all there is to know about RCWs, we find this fortunately isn't true. Erin Hewett will present some of the interesting findings from her research project in the Sandhills. Erin will just have returned from giving a presentation to the American Ornithological Union in Portland, Oregon.

Monday, September 22 Chris Helms - Lake Waccamaw. The third largest natural lake in our state is home to much more than cool birds and alligators. At least seven species of animals are found at Waccamaw and nowhere else on earth. Superintendent Chris Helms will give us an in-depth look at life in the lake as well as recent research and theories about the formation of bay lakes.

Monday, October 27 Mark Johns - Partners in Flight. Mark will give us an overview and update of this multi-agency international partnership. This organization plays a crucial role in research and education of Neotropical migrants.

Monday, November 24 Becky & Randy Westbrook – Invasive Plants Coming to America. Join Randy, an Invasive Species Prevention Specialist, and his wife, Becky, for an enlightening talk on invasive plants and the efforts of the US Geological Survey to address them.

Meeting Times: 7:00 p.m. - Fellowship and Socializing. 7:30 p.m. - Meeting and Program
Program Location: Weymouth Woods Visitors' Center Auditorium.
Phone 910-692-2167 for directions.

We normally meet on the 4th Monday of each month.

Upcoming Field Trips

IMPORTANT: Call the field trip leader to register for a trip. Please call at least one day before the trip to ensure that the trip is still on schedule.

July 26 8 a.m. **Canoe Trip on the Pee Dee River** - A great chance to explore the sparsely developed Grassy Island section of the slow-moving Pee Dee River. We should see a good variety of breeding birds, turtles, herps, bugs, and plants. Meet at 8:00 am at the Grassy Island Boat Ramp. Directions from **Business** Hwy 220 in downtown Ellerbe. Turn West onto Page Street at the only stoplight in town. Follow Page Street 2 miles and then bear right onto Grassy Island Road. Follow Grassy Island Road approx 5 miles. The WRC Boat Landing is on the right at the Mountain Creek Bridge. We will assemble at the boat landing and then float from where Grassy Island Road crosses Little River back down to the WRC Grassy Island Boat landing. The trip should take from 4-6 hours depending on side trips, lunch, etc. Bring lunch, sunscreen, binocs, fish pole, swim suit, etc, etc. Leader: Terry Sharpe – 910-652-6403 or 910-206-0602.

August 2 8 a.m. **Dragons & Damsels** - Meet at Weymouth Woods to carpool to McKinney Lake to look for dragonflies and damselflies. This will be a half-day trip. Scott will bring a net or two, and a lot of time will be spent on field identification. Scott will have a few extra pairs of binoculars. Leader: Scott Hartley – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

August 16 8 a.m. **Digital Photography Workshop** - Meet at Weymouth Woods and bring your camera and photography questions! Topics to be covered include exposure, quality of light, understanding your camera's settings, and composition. Bring your camera, camera manual, and dress for a short hike around the office. We'll spend 3 hours or so inside and then head out to take some pictures (weather permitting)! Plan to be done by 12:00. Leader: Brady Beck 910-295-7718.

September 13 5 a.m. **Ridge Junction & Mount Mitchell/Warbblers and Wildflowers** – This is an all-day trip (yes, starting at 5 a.m.!) for a wonderful day of warblers and wildflowers. If you have never been to Ridge Junction on the Blue Ridge Parkway to see the fall warbler migration, you need to go on this trip! On a good day, hundreds of warblers come up the valley and fly right over you as you just sit there! We will then go to Mt Mitchell, the highest point in the Eastern United States for more birding and looking for wildflowers. The drive to Ridge Junction/Mt. Mitchell is about four hours each way. Bring lunch, snacks, water, a lawn chair, and warm clothing. We will leave promptly at **5 a.m.** from the Wal-Mart parking lot, OR, if you drive up the day before, meet at Ridge Junction at 9–9:30 a.m. Ridge Junction is a pull out at the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Highway 128--about 12 miles south of where Highway 80 crosses the Blue Ridge Parkway. Plan on returning to Southern Pines around 9 p.m. If you want to go a day early, the Switzerland Inn is close by on the Blue Ridge Parkway, at milepost 334--see www.switzerlandinn.com. Be sure to check with the leader two or three days before the trip and let him know if you will be meeting the group at Wal-Mart or meeting the group at Ridge Junction. Leader: Scott Hartley – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

September 20 6 a.m. **Pilot Mountain Hawk Watch** – This is our annual trip to see how many species of migrating hawks we can see. We usually get a good variety of warblers, butterflies, and dragonflies. Pilot Mountain is a little over two hours away. Bring lunch and plan on returning to Southern Pines around 7 p.m. Meet at the Wal-Mart parking lot. We will leave promptly at 6 a.m. Leader: Scott Hartley – 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

October 4 9 a.m. **Wildflower Walk** – Join Bruce Sorrie for a trip to some of Bruce's favorite places in the Sandhills Gamelands. We will see a good variety of asters, goldenrods, grasses, etc. Meet at Weymouth Woods. Leader: Bruce Sorrie – bsorrie@earthlink.net

If you have other field trip ideas or would be willing to lead one, please contact Scott Hartley at 910-692-2167 or 910-944-9337.

Trip Reports

Several field trips were cancelled.

Landsford Canal State Park May 31, 2008

Several people from the Sandhills Natural history Society joined Carol Bowman for the two-and-a-half-hour jaunt to Landsford Canal State Park. Located outside of the town of Catawba, SC, the park is along a particularly beautiful portion of the Catawba River. An endangered plant species, the Rocky Shoals Spider Lily, has a stronghold along this portion of the river, and we were lucky enough to witness them in full bloom. There was about a mile walk back to where the lilies were, but is sure was worth it to be able to look towards the river and see fields of these gorgeous white flowers.

Bird-wise, it wasn't too exciting along the river, with common lowland species such as Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Parula, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Prothonotary Warbler giving us the most entertainment. On several occasions we witnessed waterthrush fledglings being fed by adult birds. Other notable bird species observed included Great Egret, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Barn Swallow. Michael McCloy



From the President's Desk: Brady Beck

Last newsletter I encouraged everyone to get out and enjoy the natural beauty and diversity of the Sandhills. If I had known it was going to be so hot, I would have suggested folks visit the museums in Raleigh and Durham! Although June-September down here can make human transplants to the South (of which I am one, by way of Indiana) second guess their choice, there is still lots to get out and see. Check out the list of field trips in this newsletter.

Seems like fire is the **HOT** topic this newsletter! Both fire related items encourage us to become more aware of the need for the beautiful landscape around us to be periodically burned. Those of us who are transplants to the Longleaf Pine ecosystem (and indeed some folks who have lived here all their lives) may not quite be used to the sweet smell of smoke from a prescribed burn. For the sake of the health of the ecosystem and also the safety of our community, however, we should look at prescribed fires as necessary and beneficial! For more information on the Firewise Communities program, go to <http://www.firewise.org/>. To get further information on the NC Prescribed Fire Council, check out <http://ncprescribedfirecouncil.org/>. You'll have to read the rest of the newsletter to find out why I have included these links!



°David Kilpatrick 2008

David was lucky enough to have this Great-Crested Flycatcher nest in a Bluebird box in his yard this summer. He observed the adults bringing food items such as Ground Skinks, caterpillars, and lots of flies to the nestlings.

Interesting Sightings:

King of Kingbirds! On July 6 Scott Hartley stopped at Hobby Field to look for the Scissortail. No Luck. He did see something really neat. A Red-tailed Hawk was flying rapidly over the field, but it had this dark shape behind it, head between the wings. It was an Eastern Kingbird perched on the Red-tail's back between the wings, and it was hammering away at the back of the Red-tail's head. The Kingbird disengaged and flew above the Red-tail and continued to dive at it until they both disappeared from sight. Scott said he has seen all kinds of birds mobbing perched and flying hawks and owls, but never one perched on the back of one.

On July 9 Michael McCloy observed a recently fledged Sharp-Shinned Hawk below the Weymouth Woods office. The staff has seen adult birds all spring and summer near the park gate--once carrying food.

Linda Jones was in Casselberry, Florida at a Publix shopping mall when she saw three Sandhill Cranes--two adults and one juvenile--in the shrubbery around a bank's drive up window. One of the adults was on watch; the other was picking one berry at a time and dropping it at the feet of the juvie. If the juvie didn't reach down and eat it, the adult picked another berry and dropped it at the juvie's feet. If the youngster ignored a berry for the third time, the adult picked a berry and fed it to the juvie. Linda watched for about 15 minutes. The most amazing part was the fact that the adults were trying to teach their offspring to eat on a Saturday morning in a very busy commercial area.

Did You Know?

House Wrens have been confirmed as successful breeders in Moore County. This species, although commonly found summering in the Piedmont, has not historically been known to breed in the Sandhills. But in late June, Susan Campbell located a pair feeding young in Whispering Pines, not far from a yard where House Wrens were suspected to have bred in 2006. The hosts, Pam and John Lyons, have a yard with a large assortment of bird houses. The House Wrens were, predictably, using a small house that was hanging in a dogwood tree. They knew the birds looked different from Carolina Wrens but did not realize how special the situation was. They were thrilled with the news--and within just a few days the young birds successfully fledged. It also appears House Wrens are attempting to breed in Pinehurst. A pair may have raised young in Village Acres area last summer and, this year, David Kilpatrick found a nest with eggs on Pinehurst #4 golf course. (Susan Campbell)

Our Forests are Adapted to Burn:

Erica Newman is a wildlife biologist with the National Park Service and a state Division of Forest Resources prescribed burner. She is also a member of the North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council, and of our SNHS. Erica recently moved to Cape Hatteras. The following is an article she wrote that she thought was relevant to our group. It was published in the *Fayetteville Observer* and the *Herald-Sun* in Durham and is reprinted herein with her permission.

Our Forests Are Adapted to Burn

By Erica Newman

"Southern forests need fire in the same way that rain forests need rain."

This was a favorite expression of Larry Landers, director of research at Tall Timbers Research Station in Florida. Larry spoke a truth that we in North Carolina continue to ignore at our peril: Our forests are fire-dependent. That is, they have evolved to be flammable, and require frequent fire for their very existence.

What we are seeing now in Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Dismal Swamp are examples of costly and dangerous after-the-fact responses to large-scale wildfires.

Our current tendency is to suppress fire, but when fire suppression is coupled with unwise development, it inevitably leads to greater destruction in both human and ecological terms. Meanwhile, excluding fire from fire-evolved areas leads to the "shading out" of hundreds of understory plants and loss of habitat for the animals that depend on them. At the same time, pine needles and dead, fire-ready materials accumulate on the forest floor in place of a living understory.

Before the advent of modern fire-suppression techniques, lightning strikes would introduce fires to the coastal and central South every one to three years. These frequent fires would thin and regenerate the trees, consume fuel loads on the ground and stimulate seed production of understory plants.

In the modern, densely settled landscape, the vast majority of naturally occurring fires are quickly put out. With the long-term buildup of tinder on the forest floor, fires that do reach any size tend to burn at the canopy level and are vastly more difficult to control. These over-story burns endanger people, property, houses and negatively impact air quality for miles around.

With North Carolina's population set to double in the next 50 years, we urgently need to take sensible steps to reconcile the need for our forests to burn with the desires of North Carolinians to live in safety and comfort. Consider the following three proposals.

First, we need many more frequent controlled burns, otherwise known as "prescribed fires," as an alternative to the policy of after-the-fact suppression of wildfires. The U.S. Forest Service, rather than the governor's office, should determine when burning bans should be enacted and when they should be lifted. Too often, the decision to impose a burning ban is influenced more by popular opinion than by an informed balancing of risk reduction and habitat restoration. Such a transfer of decision-making power would make North Carolina's fire management more like the rest of the South's.

Second, people who settle in this region should be encouraged to do so in a "Firewise" manner. For example, home insurance rates could be set at a much lower rate for houses built with metal roofs and bare-ground yards (as was popular in the old South) than conventional houses built with flammable materials and surrounded by grass lawns (which only act as tinder). In fire-prone areas, new buildings that do not conform to "Firewise" standards should be denied building permits.

With out-of-staters relocating to North Carolina in record numbers, we will soon have living here a large group of people who do not remember how the land was once managed with fire and

have no context for understanding it. Proper economic incentives will produce the safest kind of development.

Third, burning bans that are in place need separate categories to distinguish yard-waste and trash burns from habitat burns. In this way, national parks and state-owned game lands can still use their fire crews and burn responsibly during drier, more wildfire-prone times, while yard-waste burns, which are not usually attended by fire crews and fire-fighting equipment, are postponed.

With responsible fire management and "Firewise" development, we can help protect our state's natural beauty and biological diversity along with the lives and property of its human residents.

North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council Needs You!

Board members Terry Sharpe and Scott Hartley thought that members of the Sandhills Natural History Society should be introduced to the North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council (NCPFC). There is a brief description of the organization below, and much more information can be found at periodic meetings and newsletters.

Our mission and goals are:

MISSION:

to foster cooperation among all parties in North Carolina with an interest or stake in prescribed fire for the purpose of optimizing burning opportunities for the benefit of natural ecosystems, managed forests, and wildlife and to reduce the risk of damage from wildfires.

GOALS:

- * Promote best management practices to minimize smoke and air quality impacts
- * Review and suggest improvements to prescribed fire practices, regulations, and policies
- * Educate the public about the benefits of prescribed fire
- * Train prescribed fire professionals
- * Advocate for the use of fire as a land management tool

Membership is free.

Send name, phone number, address, and e-mail to Mark Megalos to join:
mark.megalos@ncsu.edu

For a copy of the latest NCPFC newsletter, e-mail Brady at beck.kb@gmail.com

General Reminder – Dues. Dues are \$5 per person, per year. Please mail your check, payable to Sandhills Natural History Society, to Carol Bowman, Treasurer, at:

Sandhills Natural History Society
P.O. Box 1472
Southern Pines, NC 28388-1472

Please include your address, telephone number, and e-mail address with your payment.

Reminder! Recycle your nature, birding, or gardening magazines at each monthly meeting. There will be a table where you can drop off or pick up magazines of interest to our group.

TEES AND LANDS' END CAPS – SNHS merchandise can be purchased at Birdie's on Broad, 220 NW Broad Street, Southern Pines, and at Wild Birds Unlimited, near Harris Teeter, Route 1, Aberdeen. SNHS members enjoy a 10% discount at Birdie's and a 5% discount at WBU. Thanks to Birdie's owner, Donna Hefton, and WBU's owner, Bill Kastern, for supporting our club! Contact Kerry at 910-528-6958 if you have any questions.

\$10	T-shirts
\$17	Baseball Caps (with embroidered logo)
\$14	Baseball Caps (with plain logo)
\$12	Mugs
\$ 3	Stickers

SNHS Board of Directors 2008:

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C/o Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve
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Southern Pines, NC 28387

ATTENTION!!!

If you have email and are experiencing trouble receiving all the newsletters and announcements via email, please contact Chris Norkus immediately.

If you do not have email, please read this:

Our field trips often have schedule changes and we send out email updates to the membership. We suggest you ask a friend who receives these emails to keep you informed. You can also periodically call the field trip leader to get the latest updates.