

# News from the Coastal North Carolina National Wildlife Refuges Complex

Alligator River, Pea Island, Pocosin Lakes,  
Roanoke River, Mackay Island, and Currituck

## Celebrating Our North Carolina Refuges Volunteers!

Staff from North Carolina Coastal Plain National Wildlife Refuge Complex recently honored volunteers for their hours of dedication to North Carolina refuges during a dinner at Pamlico Jack's Restaurant in Nags Head. Volunteers help fulfill the missions of Alligator River, Pea Island, Pocosin Lakes, and Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuges by interacting with visitors at visitor centers, helping with maintenance, conducting outreach and education programs, assisting with biological programs, and many other behind-the-scenes duties. This year, 279 individuals donated 25,375 hours. Volunteers include seasonal interns, Resident Volunteers, community service groups, and local residents.

The highlight of the evening was the recognition of Lauren and George Radecskey as Volunteers of the Year. Lauren and George are Resident Volunteers who have been returning to the refuges each year since 2013. They spend many hours at the Pea Island Visitor Center and have become the face of hospitality serving coffee and treats during Wings Over Water. George has helped the refuges save time and money by completing many maintenance projects. He and Lauren enjoy conducting programs for school groups and assisting with pelican banding. Finally, they lend their creative talents when needed such as helping with the Manteo Christmas Parade float.

Volunteers are awarded certificates and/or pins recognizing their cumulative hours spent volunteering. Those present at the dinner are listed here:

**Dawn Berliner:** 50 hour pin

**Jim Oesting:** 50 hour pin

**Howard Rock:** 50 hour pin and 100 hour certificate



George and Lauren Radecskey are awarded Volunteer of the Year certificates and jackets from Project Leader Rebekah Martin. Both of them received an 8000 hour pin, credit: USFWS.

**Mike Bryant:** 50 hour pin

**Rick Bentz:** 50 hour pin and 100 hour certificate

**Carla Gallop:** 100 hour certificate

**John McIntosh:** 100 hour certificate

**Henry Gates:** 250 hour certificate

**Cyndie Worley:** 500 hour pin

**Jim Worley:** 500 hour pin

**Elizabeth Pina:** 500 hour pin

**Marlene Schumm:** 2000 hour pin

**LaMont Warren:** 2000 hour pin

**John Thomas:** 2000 hour pin

**Neal Moore:** 5000 hour pin

**Pat Moore:** 6000 hour pin

**George Radecskey:** 8000 hour pin

**Lauren Radecskey:** 8000 hour pin

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## Celebrating Our North Carolina Refuges Volunteers! continued

Above, left: Project Leader Rebekah Martin presents Neal Moore with his 5000 hour pin, credit: USFWS.

Above right: Project Leader Rebekah Martin presents Pat Moore with her 6000 hour pin, credit: USFWS.

Left: Project Leader Rebekah Martin presents former Project Leader/current volunteer Mike Bryant with his 50 hour pin, credit: USFWS.

### Wings

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## Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society Update

Submitted by Bob Glennon

*The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society welcomed three new members to its Board of Directors at the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at Pamlico Jack's Restaurant in Nags Head on November 16.*

Two returning members were also voted back on to the Board. The Society was saddened to announce the resignation of one of its founding members and long-time board member and treasurer, Warren Davis, who had served for 30 years and donated 11,000 hours of service.

The new Board members are: Mike Bryant, a retired veteran of 37 years as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee and a refuge volunteer; Rick Bentz, a retired forester from New Jersey who volunteers at the Gateway Visitor Center and on van tours; and Al Hooks, a Certified Public Accountant and avid birdwatcher.

The returning Board members who were re-elected are Stanley Oliver, a former Board President and volunteer on native plant garden projects; and Marlene Schumm, who volunteers in the Gateway visitor center and is an avid birdwatcher.

Board members who will return for the second year of their two-year terms are: Gail Dreis, a volunteer at the Gateway Visitor Center; Jackie Orsulak, a volunteer at the Gateway Visitor Center and assistant with van tours and school programs; Bob Glennon, who conducts tours and programs and maintains the native plant gardens; and John Thomas, a volunteer at the Gateway Visitor Center, assistant with van and canoe tours, and helps with building maintenance.

The Society membership also elected the officers for 2019: Gail Dreis, President; Jackie Orsulak, Vice-President; Bob Glennon, Secretary, and Al Hooks, Treasurer.



CWRS Board Members, credit: L. Glennon

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society assists the national wildlife refuges in northeastern North Carolina meet their goals by raising and managing funds to support refuge projects. The Society has three employees: Bookstore Manager Mary Grindlay; Volunteer Coordinator Tracey Rock, and Visitor Services

Specialist Steve Brumfield. The refuges have 279 volunteers who contribute 26,000 hours annually. Volunteers include local volunteers, resident volunteers who reside in their recreational vehicles on the refuges, and interns who assist with the maintenance, biological, and visitor services programs.

## Upcoming Guided Interpretive Programs

Monthly Saturday Tram Tours continue throughout the winter and spring. Although the weather may be cooler, there is still a lot to see on Alligator River Refuge. Since the migrating waterfowl have arrived, the tram tours are a great way to sit back and relax while learning about the refuge and viewing hundreds of birds as they rest in the farm fields. Raptors are often seen soaring over the fields looking for their next meal. Sometimes visitors are treated to seeing a raptor snatch up a mouse or other critter. We never know what we'll see on the tour, but you're sure to enjoy being out in the open air. Tours are 9 am-noon the second Saturday of each month through May. To reserve a seat, contact Steve Brumfield at 252/216 9464. The fee for this tour is \$10 for anyone age 13 and over.

Saturday Red Wolf Howlings are a great way to learn about the Red Wolf Recovery Program and possibly get to hear the captive red wolves howl. From fall through spring there is no fee for the Howling Program! This is a great opportunity for scouts and other organized youth groups to learn about the refuge and red wolves. After a short introduction, participants follow the guide to a closed area of the refuge and attempt to howl up the captive red wolves. The next Howling will be on April 13 from 7 – 8:30 pm.

Friday morning bird walks are offered year-round at Pea Island. This is a great time to see a variety of birds while walking the North Pond Trail with an expert birder. Bird walks begin at 8 am and last approximately 90 minutes.

For more information, check out our program schedule at <https://www.fws.gov/ncgatewayvc/images/interp-schedule.pdf>.

## **2018 Wings Over Water a HUGE Success!**

*The 22nd annual Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival main session in October was a huge success due to fantastic weather, great leaders, and enthusiastic participants. This year's Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival (main session) was held, October 16 -21. There were 300 participants from 25 states, China, Canada, and Great Britain.*

The festival combined birding, photography, paddling, natural history, and art programs to give the participants a wide variety of ways to see and participate with wildlife. In December, a three-day birding weekend was held called WOW Encore. A total of 131 birders on 12 different trips looked for migratory birds not necessarily here yet during the October session.

*For both WOW sessions, consistent comments from registrants were about the great leaders, helpful staff, and wonderful wildlife viewing opportunities.*

Wildlife seen during the two sessions are too numerous to list here but a few highlights include: black bears, American alligators, red wolves, river otters, thousands of tundra swans, snow geese, ducks, and other shorebirds and waterfowl.

Dates for 2019 Wings Over Water Festival are October 15 through 20, 2019 (main session) and December 6 through 8, 2019 (WOW Encore session). Annual support is provided by Kitty Hawk Kayaks and Surf School, Outer Banks Cruises, Coastal Kayaks, and Portsmouth Island Boat Tours. Wings Over Water partners include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, and Carolina Bird Club.



*Alligator River Refuge Sunset Canoe Tour; credit: USFWS*



*Alligator River Birding Tour; credit: USFWS*



*Pelican Island Tour; credit: USFWS*

## Local Businesses Help Make the Wings Over Water Leader Dinner a Success

Each year during the Wings Over Water Festival, the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society sponsors a dinner for trip leaders as a way to thank them for all they do. During this time, leaders review schedules, hear updates from refuge staff, and catch up with each other. Local businesses support the Festival by generously donating delicious dishes that make the dinner possible. This year the donors were: Darrell's Seafood Restaurant, O'Neal's Sea Harvest, Jolly Roger Restaurant, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Black Pelican Oceanfront Restaurant, and The Outer Banks Brewing Station. We want to thank these businesses for their continued support.

### Support Your National Wildlife Refuges - Donate to Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society exists to support interpretive, educational, and volunteer programs of eastern North Carolina national wildlife refuges with a focus on Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges and the National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center on Roanoke Island. Your contributions to the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society help make it possible to provide this support.

Your donation helps support local K-12 schools by assisting with educational programs and funding transportation grants for students and teachers to visit the refuges and the National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center. It also helps to maintain refuge land and water trails, provide refuge visitor services staff, assist with the annual Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival, and support dozens of refuge projects and programs.

Please support your national wildlife refuges by donating \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 or more. Send check or money order to: Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society PO Box 1808, Manteo, NC 27954

You can also use a credit card by calling 252/216 9464 or visiting <http://www.coastalwildliferefuge.com/donate.html>.

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society (CWRS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution. You will receive a receipt for each contribution and an annual CWRS membership card to use for savings in CWRS gift shops.



## Resident Volunteers at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge: January-March Ren and Carola Cowden

Carola grew up in the farm country of northern Germany, south of Hamburg. She interned as a young woman with a local farm veterinarian and became an accountant. She married a professional photographer and became a successful photographer herself. After raising two children, a boy and a girl, life changed and she sought a new life in Costa Rica. Ren grew up in rural Minnesota, graduated from Dunwoody College in 1977 and proceeded to work for 40 plus years in the engineering world.

The couple met in 2012 at the beach in Samara, Costa Rica over a game of backgammon, which Carola won. Carola and Ren were married in 2014 and moved to the Twin Cities until Ren's retirement in October of 2017. Since then, they have opted to explore North America with their 5th wheel trailer as full-time RVers. Since their marriage they have teamed up with a beautiful Black Lab named Caty, and Carola's daughter gifted them with a new grandson in January named Titus, to go along with two granddaughters.

## Biological Update

Here in northeastern North Carolina, early fall storms and hurricanes have resulted in some localized flooding with some rivers overflowed. Roanoke River is in flood stage, overtopping some waterfowl plants. On the refuges, we've been busy managing the impoundments for moist-soil plants and submerged aquatic



*Snow geese and other waterfowl have made their way to the refuges, credit: K. Lebing*

vegetation. Overall, we had a warm fall and have not yet experienced prolonged cold fronts. We've observed some early migrants in small numbers, but with the forecasted cooler temperatures, we'll start seeing more and more ducks.

At Pea Island Refuge, species diversity is starting to increase with 15+ species of waterfowl detected in early December including larger groups of northern pintails, American black ducks, and American wigeon. We also recently observed first occurrences of mergansers, tundra swans, snow geese, and redheads. Fall surveys of submerged aquatic vegetation showed good distribution of muskgrass, sago pondweed, and some widgeon grass in the ponds. Last winter, we recorded 22 different species of waterfowl, with a peak observation of over 31,000 individuals. We encourage folks to explore the wildlife trails at North Pond or Salt Flats for excellent viewing opportunities (especially those large groups of redheads!).

At Alligator River NWR, we're starting to increase water levels in the moist soil units. Our planted rice responded really well this year given the wet spring/summer/fall seasons. We have started to see a few species show up here including American black duck, gadwall, mallard, and teal.

We conduct regular ground bird surveys at both refuges and will begin our wintering waterfowl aerial surveys over a larger geography later this winter. If anyone is looking for more information, please contact Supervisory Refuge Biologist Becky Harrison at [Rebecca\\_harrison@fws.gov](mailto:Rebecca_harrison@fws.gov).

## Refuge Wildlife Biologist Kris Fair Retires

After twenty years working with the federal government, Kris Fair has hung up her hat! Many people know Kris as the fish and wildlife biologist with a passion for sea turtles and other critters along the Outer Banks. But her love for sea turtles actually began when she volunteered as an animal care technician and dolphin trainer at the Clearwater Marine Science Center in Florida in the late 1980s. After working on a Hawksbill Sea Turtle Project with the National Park Service in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Kris furthered her education by attending the University of Florida.



credit: USFWS

Her first job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was at Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi working with wood ducks and Prothonotary warblers. From there, she worked at Alligator River refuge on the Atlantic White Cedar Restoration Project, Red-cockaded Woodpecker Project, and two seasons with the fire crew. She also spent time at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida doing sea turtle work before working at Mattamuskeet refuge overseeing various projects and writing permits.

Finally, Kris was hired as a Biological Science Technician at Alligator River refuge and was eventually upgraded to a Fish and Wildlife Biologist. Kris will be remaining in the area, so you might see her out on the beach as a volunteer during sea turtle season!



Staff and volunteers prepare to participate in the parade, credit: USFWS.

## Manteo Christmas Parade

Volunteers and staff worked many hours brainstorming and then assembling the refuge float this year, and their hard work paid off! The float won fourth place out of over forty floats. The theme of the parade was "A Christmas to Remember." As noted on the float description: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's public tram is filled with refuge lovers and refuge critters enjoying the activities the refuge has to offer: Wildlife Observation, Fishing, Hunting, Photography, Environmental Educational, and Interpretation. The tram is being pulled by a truck with a scene representing the old days of logging and moonshine in Buffalo City located on what is now the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. Two black bears have scared away a local resident and are enjoying a little "nip" and corn mash under the Christmas tree. But look out, there's a revenuer hot on the trail.



A black bear has taken over the moonshine still, credit: C. Trimmell