

July 2018  
Volume XXI  
No. 3



# News from the Coastal North Carolina National Wildlife Refuges Complex

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

## Working with Partners to Accomplish Our Mission

All Refuge programs rely on partners to get the job done. The fire program works cooperatively with local, state, and federal agencies to train firefighters and to prepare for wildfires. Visitor services staff continue to be involved with the Coastal Environmental Educators' Network which includes government and non-government groups. The biological and law enforcement programs also interact with various partners during the year to coordinate data collection, provide mutual aid and share "good science." Not only do we rely on partnerships, but we also enjoy being able to learn from others and help with a variety of wildlife and wildland needs.



Refuge Fire Management Officer Bert Plante, along with representatives from the Park, North Carolina Forest Service, and Nags Head Fire Department, conducted a public meeting to explain the concepts contained in the Fire Management Plan developed by the Park for mitigation and response across Cape Hatteras National Seashore. These plans involve refuges and our partnership in providing fire protection across Park lands. Meetings were also held in other towns in the area, credit USFWS.

## Inside this Issue:

Working with Partners.....	2
Welcome Vanessa Chaney .....	3
Biological Program Update .....	4
Red Wolf Intern.....	6
Learning about Buffalo City .....	6
Pea Island Update .....	7
Guided Programs on Refuges.....	7
Elementary School Students .....	8
RV Volunteer Update.....	8
Red Wolf Recovery Program .....	9
Support Your Refuges .....	9



Firefighter Equipment Operator Eric Meekins uses the Fecon masticator, a heavy duty piece of equipment capable of clearing 6.5' wide paths to create a break in the fuels backing up to private properties along National Park Service property, credit USFWS.



## **Working with Partners to Accomplish Our Mission (continued)**

Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partnered with the National Park Service (Cape Hatteras National Seashore) to conduct several fuel treatment projects aimed at reducing the risks from wildfires to the residents adjacent to federal properties along the Outer Banks. Refuges provided manpower and equipment to plan for, install and maintain a series of fuel breaks along Park boundaries in South Nags Head, Ocracoke, Manteo, and Buxton. These breaks in the traditional heavy brush and marsh grasses found along the Outer Banks will provide firefighters improved opportunities to defend lives and property exposed to wildfires.

Refuges are in the process of mowing and/or chipping underbrush and mid-story shrubs along various Park boundaries. Typically, this involves creating a 30-50' wide strip, leaving overstory trees where they occur, and reducing flammable vegetation that burns vigorously when dry. Lacking this fuel, fires typically die down as they attempt to burn through an area where actions have occurred, allowing firefighters an opportunity to knock down and stop the flames.

In the future, the Park may explore opportunities to apply prescribed fire in these locations, as appropriate, in order to further reduce fire risk to our neighbors.

### **Wings**

Alligator River & Pea Island  
National Wildlife Refuges  
PO Box 1969 (mailing)  
100 Conservation Way (physical)  
Manteo, NC 27954

Phone: 252/473 1131  
Fax: 252/473 1668  
E-mail: [alligatorriver@fws.gov](mailto:alligatorriver@fws.gov)  
[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/alligator\\_river/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/alligator_river/)



Follow us on Facebook:  
Friends of Alligator River and  
Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges and  
USFWS North Carolina



*Firefighter Equipment Operator Jeff Swain uses the masticator to clear a fireline around the Heritage Point Community on National Park Service property on Roanoke Island, credit USFWS.*

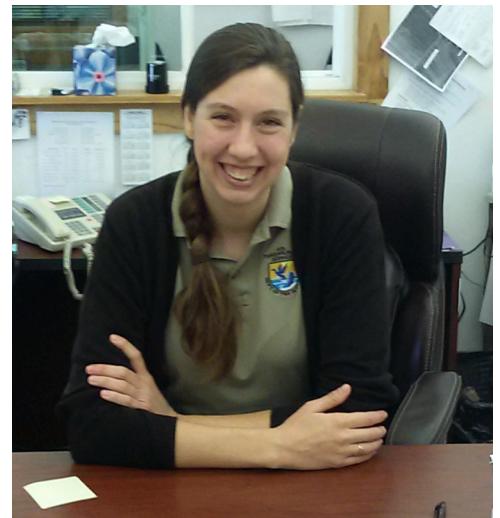


*Refuge Fire Management Officer Bert Plante spoke at the monthly Green Drinks meeting, sharing information about fire protection and how to maintain property to lessen fire risk. The mission of the Outer Banks Chapter of Green Drinks is to provide a networking opportunity for local eco-minded folks while enjoying good food and drink, credit USFWS.*



*Staff and volunteers joined members of the Coastal Environmental Educators' Network for Earth Fair at Dowdy Park in Nags Head, North Carolina. This annual event gives the local Network an opportunity to share information about the wonderful natural areas on the Outer Banks and ways to help with the various missions of the organizations, credit USFWS.*

## Welcome Vanessa Chaney to Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge



If you've visited the Pocosin Lakes Refuge office in Columbia recently, you might have met Bio Tech Vanessa Chaney. Vanessa tells us, "I am originally from a small town in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, and I currently reside in Columbia, North Carolina.

I have always loved the outdoors, and some of my favorite pastimes are fishing, swimming and horseback riding.

Due to my love of the outdoors and nature, I received my AA Degree in Forestry and Wildlife Resources, and then went on to earn my Bachelor of Science Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Resource Management from West Virginia University.

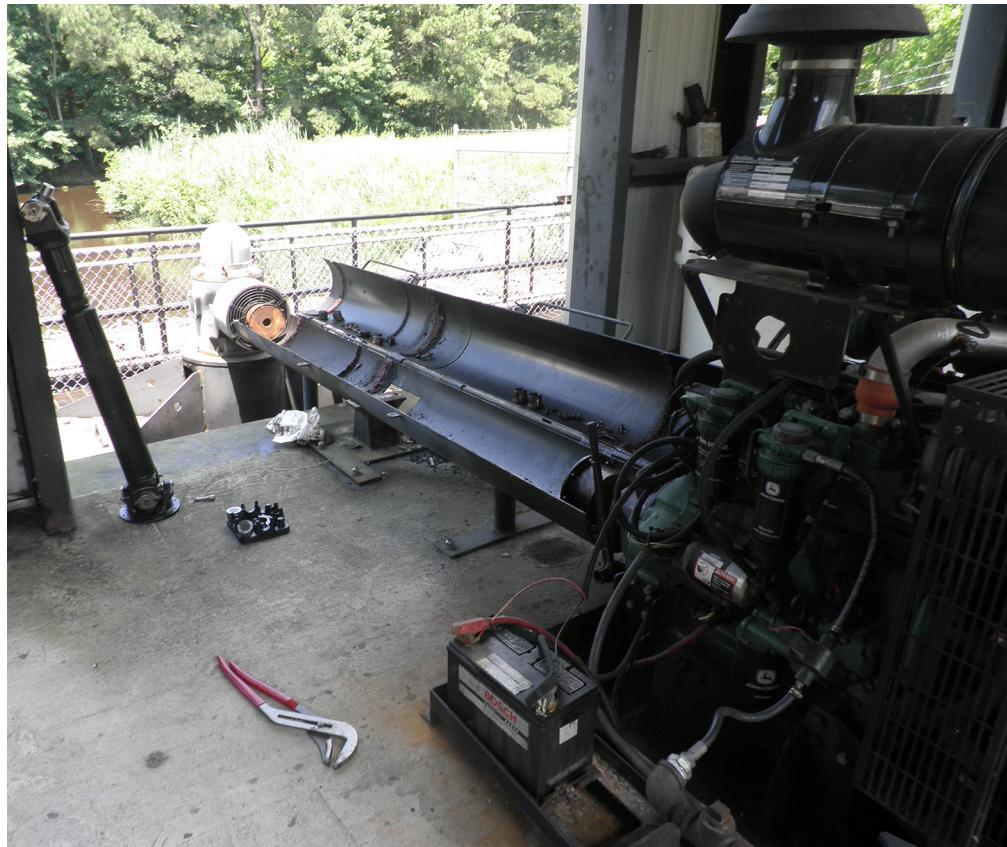
I have had the opportunity to work seasonally for several federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service in Sierra National Forest, California, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Loyalhanna Lake, Pennsylvania, and the National Park Service at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina.

Now, I am excited and extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service here at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge."



*Heavy Equipment Instructors Melvin Walston (Mattamuskeet) and Bobby Govan (Alligator River) certified 11 folks in Powered Industrial Truck (forklift) operation. Students included seven Alligator River employees, one resident volunteer, and three employees from Edenton National Fish Hatchery, credit USFWS.*





Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge has two pumping stations that are critical to water management in the farm fields. Here Edwards Machine & Welding Inc. makes repairs to the shafts and bearings at the Laurel Bay Pumping Station, credit USFWS.

## Biological Program Update

Submitted by Supervisory Wildlife Biologist Becky Harrison, PhD

*Spring and summer are busy waterbird seasons at Pea Island! Refuge staff and interns have been working to actively survey species including piping plovers, American oystercatchers, least terns, and black skimmers.*



credit: USFWS/Harrison

Beginning each spring, as nesting pairs begin using the variety of habitats at Pea Island, staff and volunteers temporarily close off different sections of the Refuge to reduce disturbance and to protect nesting birds. We adaptively manage these areas to respond to different nesting activities, so these areas may change regularly. Once nesting activities are observed, we determine what space/size is needed based on the species and number of waterbirds present. Closed areas are not a specific size or shape. If

birds move and leave a particular closure, we try to re-open the area as soon as possible. Closures are not set for specific dates either but are in response to when birds arrive and begin showing signs of breeding and nesting. On average, we construct most of our waterbird closures in April and May and often adjust them as needed when more activity occurs.

The species of waterbirds we monitor face several survival challenges. Predation and disturbance can significantly impact nesting success. There are several ways you may help to minimize the effects of human activities on these nesting birds.

First, follow all Refuge rules and regulations. Do not trespass through closed/protected areas, and give the animals space they need. We try to close only what area the birds need on the beach, so please respect the posted areas which allow a buffer from human activities. Please look out for eggs and chicks. As chicks become mobile, they may leave the closures to learn how to forage in the swash zone near the water.

Keep all dogs on leashes and away from closed areas. Unleashed dogs are a danger to these birds – chasing or harassing birds, trampling nests, killing chicks or crushing eggs. Leave no trace – be sure to take trash off the beach when you leave.

Food (including bait and scraps from fishing) can attract predators like gulls, raccoons, and coyotes. Dispose of fishing line properly, as it may entangle and injure a variety of wildlife. We appreciate your help in sharing the shore with the wildlife!

The Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) is one of several terns observed on Pea Island and is listed as a species of Special Concern in North Carolina. It is the smallest tern, measuring only about eight to nine inches long. During the breeding season, least terns have a black cap and white forehead, a thin yellow bill with a black tip, yellow or orange legs, a white underside and grayish back and wings. Terns usually occur in colonies and often nest in groups on habitats with bare sand and shell with little or no vegetation. The Refuge participates with partners including North Carolina Wildlife Resources, the National Park Service, Audubon North Carolina, North Carolina State Parks, and others in research and monitoring activities of these birds through the North Carolina Waterbird Working Committee.



*Least tern, credit USFWS/Harrison*

Least terns often arrive in April, but typically nest in May or June. In North Carolina, nest sites are shallow depressions on high, sandy sites and typically contain up to two or three eggs. Adults will actively defend the nest. Both parents will incubate the clutch for about three weeks. Chicks are well-camouflaged and hard to see until mobile. Chicks generally fly starting around four weeks of age.



*Least tern chicks and egg, credit USFWS/Harrison*

We participate in the annual Atlantic Coast Least Tern Window Count, which usually occurs in early June, during which we count adult terns and nests. This year, we observed 625+ nests in six different sections of beach habitat on Pea Island. We hope this research contributes to the working group goals of evaluating the status and viability of North Carolina's least tern population and understanding the relationship of North Carolina's population to other populations along the Atlantic coast of the United States.

It's sea turtle nesting season on Pea Island Refuge! Five species of sea turtles occur in North Carolina waters: loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). The most abundant species in North Carolina is the loggerhead that nests annually on Pea Island beaches. Green turtles are less frequent but regular nesters in North Carolina.

*All species of marine turtles that occur in North Carolina are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Loggerhead and green sea turtles are listed as threatened and the other three species are all listed as endangered under both federal and state law.*

Refuge staff, interns, and volunteers have been searching the beaches daily since Memorial Day for sea turtle nesting activities. As of June 25, we have documented 10 turtle nesting activities including five false crawls, four loggerhead nests, and one possible Kemp's Ridley nest. Kemp's Ridley sea turtles often nest during the day; this nest was reported by a vigilant visitor. Please report any sightings of sea turtles or nesting activities on Pea Island to the Supervisory Refuge Biologist, Becky Harrison, at 473-1132 x 231. If you're lucky enough to see a live turtle on the beach, please try to take some photos.



*Now available in Refuge bookstores, non-dated, new Wings Over Water t-shirts (standard and women's cut).*  
\$19.50 S-M-L-XL and \$21.50 XXL

## Red Wolf Caretaker Intern August through October Henry Gates

Henry grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina and attended college in Asheville, North Carolina. His passion for nature and wildlife remains as lively as it was when he was a child. He is currently attending U.N.C.-Ashville and is working towards a degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Ecology and Environmental Biology.



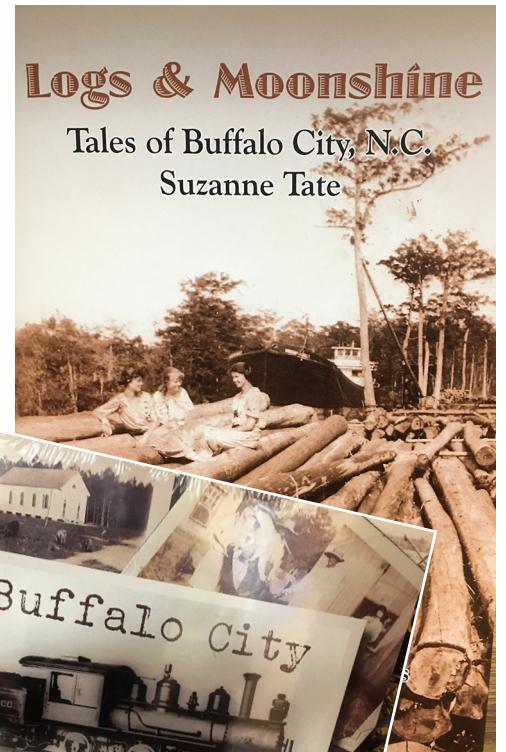
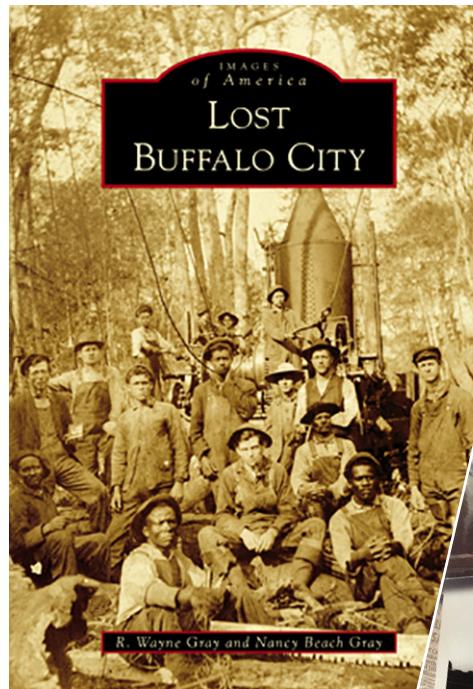
## Learning about Buffalo City

If you've stopped in the Wild Things Gift Shop lately, you might have noticed a new book being featured as you walk in the door. *Lost Buffalo City* is a wonderful book of historic photographs compiled by R. Wayne Gray and Nancy Beach Gray. Many of the photographs have never been published before.

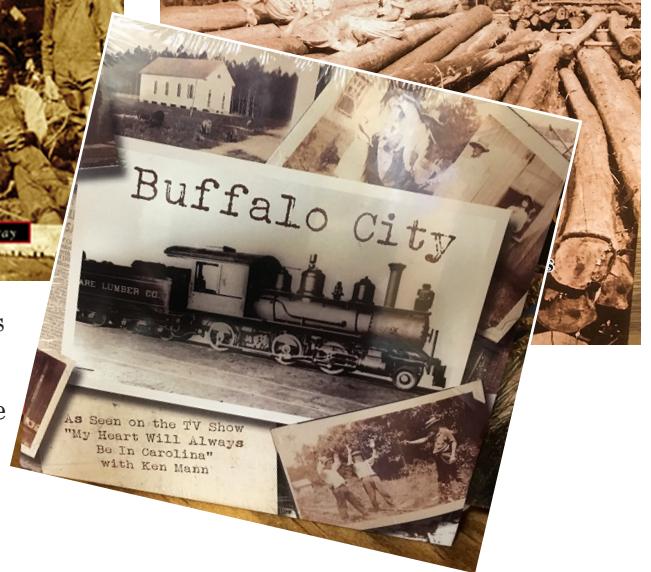
This book joins another long-time favorite, *Logs and Moonshine* by Suzanne Tate, which is a compilation of oral history interviews and photographs from former Buffalo City residents. Both books are sure to quench your thirst if you are interested in the history of the area. If you'd rather sit back and watch a narrated video about Buffalo City, check out *My Heart Will Always Be in*



Interns Morgan Davis and Meghan Roberts and Volunteer Mike Bryant with American oystercatcher chicks on Pea Island Refuge. These birds were banded in partnership with Audubon North Carolina following American Oystercatcher Working Group guidelines and with proper permits, credit USFWS/Harrison.



Carolina: Buffalo City which is available on DVD. All of these titles are available at the Wild Things Gift Shop located inside the National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center on Roanoke Island.



## **Pea Island Update**

If you've been to Pea Island recently, you might have noticed quite a few new projects, some on the highway and some on the Refuge! Please continue to use caution while driving through Pea Island especially near the Bonner Bridge and any area where pedestrians are crossing the highway.



In partnership with the Park Service, new signs have been installed at the crosswalk and at other beach locations to help visitors understand rip currents, credit USFWS.



A barrier has been installed along the driveway near the ramp to the Visitor Center. This will help to divert any overwash that occurs if the ocean breaches the dunes along the highway. This project was completed by Assistant Refuge Manager Art Beyer and Resident Volunteer George Harrison. Also completed by Art and George, along with Resident Volunteer Peggy Harrison, was the application of a weatherproofing solution to the outside of the Visitor Center, credit USFWS.



The New Inlet parking lot and boat launch have finally been cleared of construction vehicles! This is a popular launch site that has been closed for a few years. Just a reminder that personal watercraft launching and wind surfing/kiteboarding are not permitted uses on national wildlife refuges, credit USFWS.

## **Guided Programs on the Refuges**

Our 2018 program schedule has been posted! You may download and print at <https://www.fws.gov/ncgatewayvc/images/interp-schedule.pdf>.

Whether you're looking to join a guided canoe or tram tour, learn about turtles, bears, birds, or sea life, or have always wanted to howl with the captive red wolves, you're sure to find something fun and exciting on the schedule. Programs through December are listed on the schedule.



On North Pond Trail, old benches have been replaced with new ones constructed by resident volunteers Bob and Liz Haber, credit Liz Haber.

## **Students from P. W. Moore Elementary School in Elizabeth City Enjoy a Morning of Learning**



*Above: students spent the morning learning about habitats while in the Visitor Center.*



*Above right: students enjoyed learning about the Red Wolf Recovery Program during their field trip.*

*Right: students learned about prescribed burning while doing the scavenger hunt in the Visitor Center; all credit USFWS.*



## **RV Volunteer Update**

Many resident volunteers spend their time traveling around to new locations while they are volunteering. Still others return to North Carolina refuges year after year.

### ***First-time Resident Volunteers:***

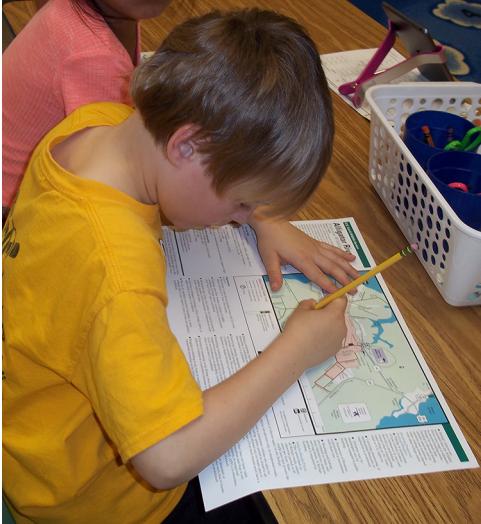
Judy and Harold Casterline  
(Pea Island July and August)

### ***We welcome back these couples:***

Cyndie and Jim Worley  
Alligator River: July  
Pea Island: August through October

Wendy and Roy Gatewood  
Alligator River: August through October

Lauren and George Radecsky  
Pea Island: September through January



Each year, Manteo Elementary School Kindergarten teacher Tammy Watkins teaches her students basic map-reading skills including how to find places to hike, paddle, and fish. She enjoys using the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge map as a tool since many of the children have been to the Refuge or live adjacent to it, credit T. Watkins.

## **Update on Red Wolf Recovery Program**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes new management rule for non-essential, experimental population of red wolves in North Carolina. The public comment period is part of a 30-day process that begins with the publication of the proposed 10(j) rule and the associated draft Environmental Assessment in the Federal Register for public comment on June 28, 2018, and will continue through July 30, 2018. The Service will consider all comments on the proposed 10(j) rule and draft Environmental Assessment that are received or postmarked by that date. Information on how to comment can be found at [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) under docket number FWS-R4-ES-2018-0035. For more information, visit [fws.gov/redwolf](http://fws.gov/redwolf).



The Kindergarten Young Naturalist Program helps children learn about the wildlife in the area during a monthly meeting in the classroom at their schools. The final meeting of the school year gives the children a chance to act like animals during the Wildlife Olympics! They flap their “wings” like a hummingbird, balance like a squirrel, crawl like a ghost crab, jump like a mullet, and raise their body like a green anole, USFWS.

## **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 NC 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 refuges and the National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. They also help 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, P.O Box 1808, Manteo, NC 27954. You may also use a credit card by calling 252/216 9464 or visiting <http://www.coastalwildliferefuge.com/donate.html>.

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society (CWRSS) 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 CWRSS membership card to use for savings in CWRSS gift shops.