

Notes From the President



John Graham

Dear friends, you are standing atop Mount Mitchell; 6,684 feet; the highest point east of the Mississippi River;

facing eastward; in the predawn silence, not even the howling of the coyotes break this reverie; slowly a rosy tint filters through the icy mist, as the darkness of night drops away, hazy ghosts of once proud Fraser fir and red spruce emerge; the taste of vinegar awakens our senses as a reminder of our impact (acid rain) on this billion year old formation known as the Black Mountains; its peaks now emerge as the dawn of a new day breaks.

We stand in awe and maybe disbelief as our eyes look over the waters of Lake James, Lake Norman, Jordan Lake, and the oasis of Umstead, a trumpeting cloud rises from pristine Lake Phelps at Pettigrew and comes to rest on a huge sand dune known as Jockeys Ridge.

That trumpeting cloud is hundreds of Tundra swans rising in unison to greet the morning sun.

Wow, in a glance you have traversed 500 miles of wonderment.

What do these seven named lakes and sites have in common?

They are 7 of the 39 unique sites that make up our N.C Division of Parks and Recreation.

Each of these 39 is a gem and together they form the crown that protects our natural heritage of rare

and endangered forms of animal and plant life, geological formations that have invited scholarly study, and a serenity that brings peace to our hearts.

We are dazzled by these treasures; so diverse and so humbling. We slowly realize that we have the responsibility of “stewardship” for these gifts, which are not of our making.

We are the “Creation Caretakers” of what Nature has so generously given to us.

We join the 500 professionals of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, who manage, protect, nurture and teach us about these “Naturally Wonderful” treasures.

Many like-minded citizens in all walks of life have made possible the conservation and preservation of our natural heritage.

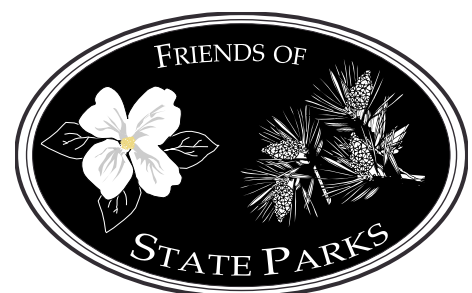
With the actions of our General Assembly on March 3, 1915, establishing Mt. Mitchell as the first state park in N.C. marked the beginning of one of the first state park systems in the nation. Their support for our parks continues to this day and for their vision we are most thankful.

We take note of this as we celebrate North Carolina State Parks’ “90th Anniversary”, during 2006.

Friends of State Parks, an incorporated 501-C-3 non-profit organization is in its 38th year of support of our state parks. Our efforts on behalf of our parks are all voluntary. Many others join us in this effort to protect and preserve our natural heritage and our citizenry should be appreciative of these many efforts.

To become a vital partner in this mission we invite you to visit our website @ www.ncfsp.org. You will be glad that you did.

John E. Graham
President



Welcome Friends of Hammocks Beach and Bear Island!

Friends of State Parks is delighted to announce that Friends of Hammocks Beach and Bear Island have elected to become a Chapter of FSP. The Hammocks Beach group will continue to focus on issues affecting those parks - canoe trails, improvements on Bear Island including making sure the channel dredging keeps the ferry route usable, and working with the Coastal Federation to add Jones Island to the North Carolina State Parks system. Their joining FSP will add the voices of 200 voters to our influence with the legislature - or perhaps those of the 600 other voters who are readers of this newsletter and members of Friends of State Parks to *their* voices and *their* issues.

Friends of Hammocks Beach and Bear Island have been in existence since 1991. In 1995 David Pearson, President of FHB&BI received a Special Achievement Award from DEHNR for his leadership in forming the group and for the support he has brought to the Department of Parks & Recreation.

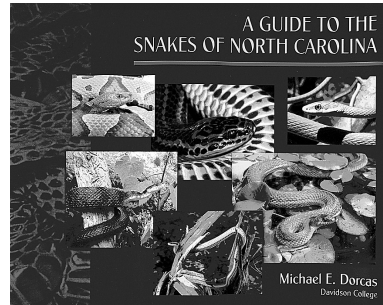
Mark your calendar

The following board was elected at the FSP Annual General Meeting:

John Graham - President, Jim Richardson - 1st Vice-president, Bob Sowa - 2nd Vice-president, Alec Whitaker - Secretary, Betty Martin - Treasurer, Board Members at Large - Don Allen, Leon Carter, Caroline Donnan, Robert Jones, Lib Conner, Ken Perkins, Morgan Richardson, Alice Zawadzki

The next quarterly meeting of Friends of State Parks will be held at Fort Fisher State Park on Saturday, January 27th starting at 11 am. All are welcome.

Christmas is coming ...



and a copy of *A Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina* would make a great gift to someone who enjoys the outdoors.

They are available at \$14.95 + \$2 S&H or at the special price of \$9.95 + \$2 S&H for members. Send your

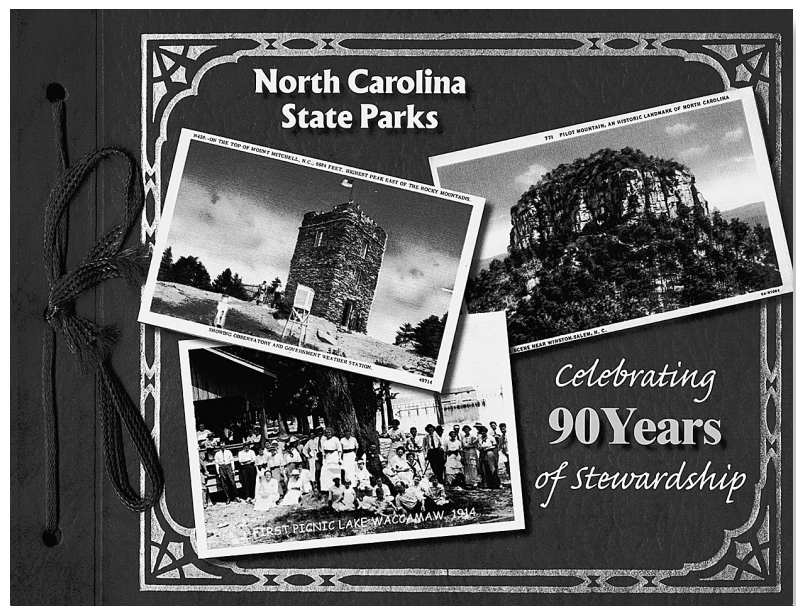
check for one (or more) along with your subscription!

Friends of State Parks Membership Dues

It has been our practice to send out membership renewal reminders in the Winter issue of the newsletter. However, we have had requests from some members who habitually make all their tax deductible contributions in December to move this to the Fall issue. So this month if you have, in the past, been a contributor your newsletter comes in an envelope together with another for sending in your membership dues.

If you don't receive an envelope and you would like to join or contribute use the form on the back page. Students & seniors - \$10, Individual - \$15, Family - \$20, Donor - \$25, Organization or Chapter - \$35, Patron - \$100

... and in addition to any applicable tax deduction, the good feeling of helping our parks, anyone whose contribution is received before December 31st will get a copy of *Celebrating 90 Years of Stewardship*, the anniversary booklet covering ninety years of North Carolina's State parks



The Longleaf Woods of Weymouth

A Vision of James Boyd on a Railroad Whistle Stop contributed by Alice Zawadzki

James Boyd, grandfather of James Boyd the famous North Carolina author, was a steel and railroad magnate around the turn of the 1900s. On a railroad trip through the Sandhills area, the first James Boyd was deeply moved by the beauty of the Longleaf Pines. By then most of the virgin longleaf pines had disappeared as a result of logging and naval stores operations, which began in the area in the 1870s when the railroads arrived. Grandfather Boyd purchased 1200 acres east of Southern Pines to save the longleaf from logging. He created an estate, Weymouth, because the pines reminded him of the trees in Weymouth, England. His vision and conservation ethic led to the preservation of this treasure. In April 1963, his author/grandson's widow, Katharine Boyd, donated 403 acres to North Carolina to establish the first natural area in the North Carolina State Park system. (The gift was 403 acres because at that time the minimum donation of land to the state was 400 acres.)

On October 28, 2006, the Board of Friends of State Parks met at nearby Penick Village, another part of the original Weymouth estate, which was donated to the Episcopal Church by the Boyds, as a retirement village. When Katharine died in 1974, she bequeathed Weymouth to Sandhills Community College. In 1979, the Friends of Weymouth purchased this James Boyd Home and Grounds to establish the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities. The center is adjacent to another 165-acre site added to the natural area in 1977, the Boyd Round Timber Tract. The center serves as an access to this tract, which contains "round timber" (a colloquial expression to describe old growth trees, which are 250 to 400 years old). One was dated at 487 years old. Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve now contains 898 acres. We met at Penick Village because the visitors' center is undergoing renovations, which include better accessibility and raising the roof of the two wings, which originally were flat roofed.

Superintendent Scott Hartley told us about James Boyd, his passion for longleaf and his dedication to its protection. It continues the saga of the State Parks and Natural Areas that we visit with our meetings; each precious place starts with the protection and devotion of a visionary who saves it initially from destruction. Thank you Grandpa James, Au-

thor James and wife Katharine Boyd.

We learned about the Sand Hills Conservation Partnership that links several state and federal agencies working together to protect the longleaf pine ecosystem. My question whether the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program (NCPCP) was part of the partnership (with its recent 120-acre acquisition of the Eric Larson tract to protect a plethora of endangered plants) led to our meeting four local FSP members who attended. Len and Joyce Tufts are longtime residents related to important founders of the community. Bob and Ruth Stolting, recent retirees to the area, are beekeepers and private landowners. They are longleaf ecosystem stewards on their property, which adjoins the NCPCP site. They were so

delighted that someone knew of the special place.

A few years ago, Eric Larson was stymied in his search for a conservation agency that would purchase his acreage for protection. When there seemed no conservation

venue for him available, he investigated selling the land to developers. As neighbors, Bob and Ruth were involved in trying to save the land from development. Thankfully at the 2005 State Fair NCPCP exhibit in Raleigh, Eric Larson met Rob Evans, the only state-funded person in the state's Plant Conservation Program, whose job it is to protect all the state's endangered



The Center at Weymouth Woods - see the colors at: <http://www.rasman.com/fsp/Meet2006Oct.html>
Photo: Bob Sowa

plants from extinction. For the first time, Eric learned about this small Department of Agriculture program that can apply to the NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund for a grant to purchase land with endangered plant species. With that one conversation began the process of protecting this sandhills site, which did receive a recent NHTF grant for purchase. At a break, Bob, Ruth and I talked about the newly forming Friends of the NC Plant Conservation Program. Hopefully the future will bring better support and wider awareness for NCPCP in its mission to protect the native flora and its habitats in North Carolina. www.ncplant.com (Rob Evans, plant ecologist 919:733-3610 x249)

The original vision of Eric to save his special place and Bob and Ruth's effort to assure that it would not be developed may bring future success stories in protecting small acreages that take lots of stewardship to maintain these fragile ecosystems. It is good to hear of partnerships and hopeful to think of possibilities where we build bridges and alliances not only to purchase and protect special places but also to work together in the advocacy and forever stewardship that is essential.

At the meeting we met Assistant Director of State Parks, David G. Reuter. He shared with us his long time association with and dedication to State Parks along with hopeful signs of protecting other important masterpieces around the state.

After the meeting some of the FSP Board went for a wonderful late afternoon walk at the Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve Bower's Bog Trail and the beginning of Lighter Stump Trail with delightful, dedicated ranger Kim Hyre. We saw the flight of a red-cockaded woodpecker and in Kim's words heard their talking to each other that sounded like "a squeaky toy for a dog". Ranger Kim was so full of good humor and terrific stories. We learned about Mr. Bower, the neat old guy who hoofed down the 19 acre plot which acted as a buffer for his land that is now a part of the preserve where he cut down every oak with an ax, had his own tar pit, and managed the buffer in a way that made it the best example of how a longleaf community should be kept open during the time where the no-burn "Smoky the Bear" reigned supreme to the now-known detriment of

the ecosystem. Ranger Kim told us how planting longleaf is planting for your great, great grandchildren because of the extremely slow growth rate of the young pine trees.

When longleaf pines are 250 years old they begin to flatten out at the top. There is no heart pine in the young trees. At 250 there is almost nothing else except heart pine where no sap flows except for the outside one to two inches. It may then take 15 years for red-cockaded woodpeckers to excavate a nest inside. They have to wait during the process for the sap on the outside to dry and build up as they continue their work. In the 1700s there were over 90 million acres of longleaf pine forests. Now only about 3 million acres remain. The two-layer fire dependent grassy understory forest was very hard to navigate. Native Americans bent small trees that kept their bend to serve as trail markers.

We learned so much about the plants and animals. Ranger Kim found a white puffball which a praying mantis was creating as she was intently pulsating as she was laying her eggs. As a finale Ranger Kim found us a beautiful, deep blue Gentian autumnales, Sandhills gentian, as it was closing its petals with the setting sun.

Superintendent Hartley, Ranger Hyre, and Assistant Director Reuter are three examples of the blessings we have in our devoted State Parks staff who are careful stewards of the masterpieces that are protected in our State Parks and Nature Preserves made possible by the visionaries who saved them from consumption.

Mail to : Betty Martin, 820 Merrie Rd. Raleigh NC. 27606

Please send me: ___ copies of A Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina @ \$14.95 + \$2 S+H
___ Videos: Faces of Change: the Conservation of the Blue Wall @ 24.95

SOLD OUT

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Address : _____ City & Zip _____