



Friends of State Parks

Supporting the State Parks of North Carolina Since 1973

PO Box 37655
Raleigh NC 27627
Web: www.ncfsp.org

Summer 2011

Congratulations!!! Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Winners

By David Pearson, President

Each year the North Carolina Wildlife Federation presents the prestigious Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards, an effort to honor individuals, governmental bodies, organizations, and others who have exhibited an unwavering commitment to conservation in North Carolina. These are the highest natural resource honors given in the state. By recognizing, publicizing, and honoring these conservation leaders—young and old, professional and volunteer—the North Carolina Wildlife Federation hopes to inspire all North Carolinians to take a more active role in protecting the natural resources of our state.

This year the Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Winners include North Carolina's Division of Parks and Recreation Director, Lewis Ledford and a consistent Friends of State Parks supporter, Great Outdoor Provision Company, for their unwavering commitment to conservation.

Lewis Ledford has been named the Conservationist of the Year. Many of us are familiar with Lewis as the director of the North Carolina State Parks system. Lewis joined the state parks system in 1976 and was named director of the division in April 2004. He is the first director to rise from entry-level ranger to head the agency. He began his career as a seasonal ranger at Mount Mitchell State Park when he was in college. Upon graduation, he worked at William B. Umstead State Park before returning to Mount Mitchell where he served as superintendent for five years and west district superintendent for 16 years before being named superintendent of state parks in 2000.

Throughout his career, Lewis has been instrumental in developing important partnerships with a variety of groups, including conservation organizations, major land owners and other state, local and federal government agencies. Since assuming the role as head of the North Carolina state parks system, Lewis has provided outstanding leadership and direction for the agency spearheading unprecedented park creation and acquisition.

In a state with some of the country's highest population increases and competing interests in commercial development of lands, since 2004, five new state parks, a state trail and six state natural areas have been established by the N.C. General Assembly. Ledford has been a driving force in the creation and development of the Gorges State Park and the establishment of Grandfather Mountain, Chimney Rock, Haw River, Carvers Creek and Mayo River State Parks. Since Lewis became director in 2004, North Carolina has added almost 37,000 acres to the state parks system.

Great Outdoor Provision Company of Raleigh has been named the Business Conservationist of the Year. Contributing to organizations from local land trusts to Boy Scout troops, from the Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail to local rescue missions, the Great Outdoor Provision Company gives back to North Carolina, embodying the best of local ownership, entrepreneurship, and investment in the lives of its customers. Founded in 1972, the company now has seven stores in seven North Carolina cities.

Great Outdoor Provision Company has been a strong supporter of Friends of State Parks, Inc. and has made significant contributions to our programs. Several years ago Great Outdoor Provision Company partnered with Friends of State Parks, Inc. to establish the Junior Ranger Program and today the Junior Ranger Program is available in every State Park and hundreds of Junior Rangers are inducted into the program annually.

These awards were presented at a gala banquet in Durham on August 27, 2011 and several members of Friends of State Parks attended to show their support. I hope everyone who supports North Carolina State Parks and the spirit of conservation will take the time to congratulate Lewis Ledford and stop by Great Outdoor Provision Company and congratulate them for their commitment to conserving North Carolina's great natural resources.

Feeding Wildlife Prohibited ... Bravo! The Trickle Method Works

Alice Zawadzki

What a wonderful welcome Dorothy Graham and I had to Stone Mountain State Park for the Friends of State Parks Board meeting July 30, 2011: the sign read: "Feeding Wildlife Prohibited".

I yelled out: "Bravo! How wonderful." Dorothy, can you take a picture of that?

On the drive up that morning from Durham, I told Dorothy about my first visit to Stone Mountain the summer of 2002 as a volunteer for "Pulse", NC Vegetation Survey, botany boot camp since 1988 for folks interested in studying the natural communities of the Carolinas. www.cvs.bio.unc.edu My team for two days was to study the flora along Garden Creek. We were appalled on our drive into the park: the deer browse layer was 6 foot high far into the woods. The only native vegetation below 6 foot was New York fern. We had to walk about a mile up the creek before we began to find any sign of an herbaceous layer at ground level.



about this. The report to parks has to include the devastation caused by deer which is directly related to humans feeding them. I have been doing that trickling about deer for some time now. With over one million deer in NC, I was glad to read in NC Wildlife years ago about Hunters for the Hungry www.h4hungry.org

Dorothy and I drove a few miles through the park. What a difference 9 years makes with an active education effort and a state parks regulation that makes feeding wildlife a class 3 misdemeanor. There were small rhododendron shrubs near ground level; we saw a beautiful orange orchid, *Habenaria ciliaris* near the road, and a covey of sweet

pink 4-petaled flowers that sure looked like a *Rhexia* at 18 miles an hour.

When we came out the first evening to go back to our cabin outside the park, we were mystified with the traffic jam coming into the park. I suggested that we take the long way out against the traffic to avoid the parade. We had no idea what was happening in the park. The next evening the same parade occurred. I said: "Let's find out what this is all about." To our horror, the long parade of cars was the evening ritual of feeding the park deer out of the car windows. Some people threw slices of bread, but it was very common to see people hand-feeding the deer. I was beside myself in disbelief. I like to see deer, but this was outrageous. My poor auto companions politely listened to my monologue. We have to do something



Congratulations NC State Parks. Your efforts make a difference. Bravo!

FSP Board Meeting

Stone Mountain State Park hosted the summer Friends of State Parks board meeting on July 30th. Ranger Jeff Jones welcomed and updated the group on park staffing and activities. Expansion of camping sites from 37 to 87 is generating higher utilization of the park at a time when there have been staff reductions caused by budget cuts. Stone Mountain continues to have a great demand for search and rescue, and searching for visitors in the park has

become a weekly occurrence, especially on weekends.

Western District Superintendent Tom Jackson updated the board on activities in the western district. Park utilization is high. Gorges visitors' center and picnic shelter construction is underway; Lake Norman's new building which will also house the District office is in the design phase; Lake James has

gained approval for 10 miles of mountain bike trails and Elk Knob State Park is getting a new maintenance area. Budget cuts have resulted in 18 positions being cut across the state, five of those in the western district.

Safety is a great concern in the parks; an education campaign is underway about staying away from the top of waterfalls where there have been fatalities. Tom suggested that perhaps FSP could contribute to this education effort. Bears are a problem also for which staff are being trained.

The Board voted to accept Friends of Pettigrew State Park and Friends of High Country State Parks as chapters of FSP. There are currently 21 Friends Groups across the state. For a listing, visit the FSP website www.ncfsp.org.

The next board meeting will be at Medoc Mountain State Park on October 29th at 11 a.m. New board members and officers will be elected. This is the annual meeting and all FSP members are invited to attend.

After the Board meeting, Ranger Jeff Jones gave the board members a tour of the Park. On Sunday the Friends of Mt. Jefferson State Natural Area hosted a meeting at Mt. Jefferson. New River State Park Superintendent Joseph Shimel spoke to the Board and Ranger Tom Randolph led an interpretive and education tour of the Mt. Jefferson Natural Area.



Photo: Ranger Jeff Jones with FSP members at Stone Mountain State Park

News from State Parks

Hangin' Rock State Park will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Saturday, October 8, 9:00am – 4:30 pm, featuring Dr. Harley El Jolley, author of CCC book *That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace*; “War Stories, Tall Tales, Fond Remembrances” by past and present park staff, and the Snow Creek Old Time Band.

Friends of Sauratown Mountains are participating in the **Pilot Mountain** hawk watch from September 11-30 where it may be possible to see 13 raptor species, including Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, and Osprey.

A crew of volunteers and a state parks naturalist held the first-ever butterfly count in Rockingham County (including **Mayo River State Park**). They logged 818 butterflies and an impressive 41 species.

In August, wildfire started by a lightning strike crossed the Virginia Line into the **Dismal Swamp State Park** causing the park to close. Rangers and other park personnel were on the front lines... Nearly 100 firefighters were on the ground and in the air fighting the fire, according to wildlife refuge officials.

Increased activity by black bears prompted the closing of the family campground at **Mount Mitchell State Park** in August. Rangers at the park had responded to complaints of bears rummaging for food in the campground area, and similar activity prompted the U.S. Forest Service to close campgrounds and trails in the adjacent Appalachian Ranger District of Pisgah National Forest. Bear sightings are often more frequent in late August and September as the animals range farther for food sources in anticipation of winter.

State Parks Annual Report

To see the progress our state parks system has made in these challenging times you can access the Division's latest annual report on their website. http://www.ncparks.gov/News/media_room/docs/2011_annual_rpt.pdf

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FRIENDS OF STATE PARKS - OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

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Upcoming Park Festivals

Elk Knob Headwaters Day on September 10
South Mountains Nature Day on September 24
Jordan Lake Heritage Day on October 1

Volunteers to assist on the FSP booth should contact Jim, jimr@ncfsp.org

Next Board Meeting

Saturday, October 29th 11 a.m.
Medoc Mountain State Park