The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

www.ncsparks.net for State Parks Info and Events

Michael F. Easley, Governor | July 2006 | Volume 20 Number 4 | William G. Ross Jr., Secretary, DENR

PROTECTION SOUGHT FOR BOGS, SAVANNA

Two rare and highly sensitive types of ecosystems would be brought under the protection of the state parks system as state natural areas if pending bills are approved by the N.C. General Assembly this summer.

The action would authorize the Mountain Bog State Natural Area in Avery County and Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area in Pender and Onslow counties.

Companion bills are sponsored by Sen. Charles Albertson in the senate and representatives Carolyn H. Justice, Robert Grady and Pricey Harrison in the house.

The N.C. General Assembly is considering a $1 billion bond referendum to finance a five-year land and water conservation plan. See story on Page 5.

The State Parks Act directs the system to include representative examples of North Carolina's archaeological, geological, biological, scenic and recreational resources. Such specific examples of the state's natural diversity are considered "resource themes."

The clusters of mountain bogs and savannas are identified as important additions in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative, which surveys all known significant sites in the state. Three state natural areas – on the Haw River in Chatham County, at Elk Knob in Watauga County and Beech Creek Bog in Avery County – have also been added to the system as a result of the initiative.

As a practical matter,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

WORK DAY DRAWS TRAILS FANS TO PARKS

Ranger Bill Duke passes out tools at Umstead.

With leaf rakes, water bottles and muddy boots, thousands of citizens traipsed onto trails in North Carolina June 3 to appreciate and improve.

National Trails Day drew hikers and volunteers into many state parks as rangers scheduled special hikes or tackled trail construction projects, taking advantage of the spike in volunteers. The largest turnout was at William B. Umstead State Park, where Recreation Equipment Inc. (REI) had recruited a small army of volunteers through its three retail stores in the Triangle.

After passing out a truckload of rakes, pickaxes and Pulaski tools and strategically placing nearly 100 volunteers along the park's Sycamore Trail, Ranger Bill Duke said that the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Howes reappointed PARTF chairman

Gov. Mike Easley has reappointed Jonathan B. Howes to a three-year term as chairman of the Parks and Recreation Authority. The 11-member authority is the governing body of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, which provides funding for the state parks system and for a program of grants to local governments for parks development.

Howes, Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources from 1993-97, has been the authority's chairman since 1998 and was instrumental in establishing the scope and direction of its work.

"Jonathan was a central figure in the creation of the trust fund and his influence has been keenly felt. As a result, every state park has benefited in terms of land acquisition and opportunities for education and recreation, and almost every county in the state has benefited by new parks and green space," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation.

"His commitment to the trust fund's mission has infused the authority with a particular sense of purpose, and that has made it very effective."

In its 12-year history, the trust fund has set aside more than $52 million for land acquisition for state parks and state natural areas and provided more than $100 million for 159 capital projects in the parks.

More than $70 million has been awarded in 418 grants to local governments for parks and recreation projects. And, more than $8.5 million has been earmarked for a public beach and coastal access program.

"I am very proud of what has been accomplished with assistance from the trust fund," Howes said. "And, I'm grateful to Governor Easley for giving me the opportunity to continue this important work. Our state is a better place due to the conservation trust funds, but much remains to be done."

Howes is a special as-

Continued on Page 3

From The Director's Desk

The news that the General Assembly may expand the state parks system with two new state natural areas is gratifying. The protection of a cluster of mountain bogs in Avery County and a savannah area in Pender and Onslow counties puts us further along in our quest to protect those rare "representative examples" of the state's diversity of natural resources. That is part of our responsibility under the State Parks Act.

The additions would also be another benchmark in pursuing the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative. This five-year-old effort has already yielded extraordinary dividends – the authorization of four new state parks and three new state natural areas – and is an invaluable planning tool. It's being continually refined and it positions the division to be an important partner in the state's overall conservation effort. The needs for parks and conservation are also being addressed in a $1 billion bond initiative by the Land for Tomorrow coalition.

Elsewhere in *The Steward* this month is an update on progress of the four new state parks. That progress is never as rapid as local communities would like, but I'm proud of the hard work our staff has done in transforming vision into reality on these projects. And, I'm proud of the support we've had from the trust funds, legislators and others in state government.

On another note, we witnessed twin tragedies at state recreation areas on Memorial Day weekend with the drowning of a child at Falls Lake and a near-drowning at Jordan Lake. (As of this writing, the victim remains in critical condition.)

We grieve with the community at large when these accidents occur. But, I do want to commend the staff at both parks for the professionalism and caring attitude of their response. That level of competency, I'm sure, is appreciated by the community as well as by the division.

Sincerely,

Lewis Ledford

PARTNERS CELEBRATE RCW SUCCESS

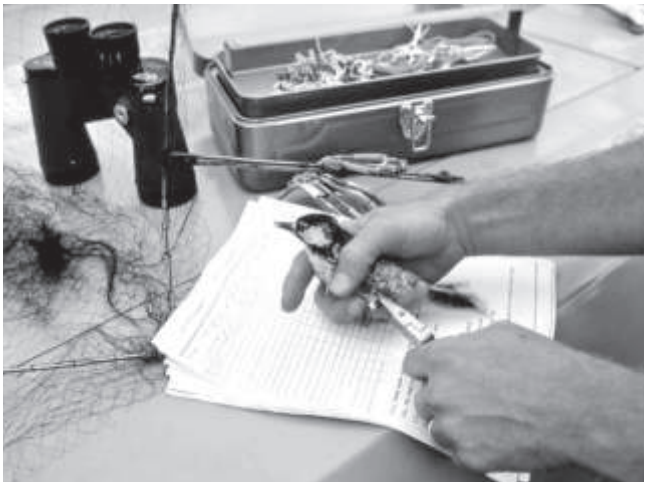
The state parks system was recognized June 7 for its contribution in restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem and the red-cockaded woodpecker in the sandhills in and around the Fort Bragg military base.

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the recovery of the state's sandhills population of the federally endangered bird five years earlier than anticipated. Much of the credit, according to federal officials, goes to innovative partnerships and conservation plans with state agencies and nonprofit groups.

The recovery — from 238 nesting groups in 1992 to 368 such clusters today — will mean a reduction in training restrictions on Fort Bragg.

"Fort Bragg has been a leader in coming up with innovative ways to partner with private, federal and state agencies in order to meet their recovery responsibilities for the red-cockaded woodpecker," USFWS Director Dale Hall said. "Over the past 15 years, the positive relationships forged between these sandhills partners transformed an atmosphere rife with conflict into one of collaboration."

One of the principal relationships is the Sandhills Conservation Partnership, a consortium of agencies that has focused on longleaf pine forests and their species. Besides the state parks system, the U.S. Army and the USFWS, the partnership includes the state Wildlife Resources Commission, the U.S. Army Environmental Center, The Nature Conservancy, the Sandhills Area Land Trust and the Sandhills Ecological Institute.



Banding projects are part of the effort to restore red-cockaded woodpecker habitat.

To date, the partnership has conserved through fee-simple purchase or purchase of conservation easements more than 12,000 acres of land as part of a strategic plan for land conservation and management to ensure the long-term health of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

The state parks system has been active in partnership projects such as creating a regional database for biologists and enhancing habitat in areas surrounding the military base.

One state park unit, Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve in Moore County, lies on the fringe of Fort Bragg, and has an aggressive longleaf pine conservation program that includes prescribed burning and species monitoring.

The parks system was presented with a USFWS award for helping in the woodpecker recovery. In the past 10 years, the Weymouth Woods population increased from two birds in one group to about 20 birds in five groups.

The army and The Nature Conservancy have a cooperative agreement with a goal to fund the purchase of key sandhills tracts that have a high overall conservation value. The state parks system, in turn, is working with the conservancy to create the new Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park just east of Fort Bragg.

The park's core property is 1,172 acres formerly held by the conservancy. It is premier longleaf habitat and will also act as a development buffer for the base.

HOWES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

sistant to the chancellor and adjunct professor of Regional Planning and Public Policy at UNC at Chapel Hill. He is a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, a former director of the Triangle Land Conservancy, board chair of North Carolina Audubon and chair of the community advisory board for WUNC Radio.

Howes is a recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine. He served as mayor of Chapel Hill from 1987-91.

A native of Knoxville, TN, Howes earned a bachelor's degree in history and political science at Wittenberg University, a master's degree in regional planning from the University of North Carolina and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University.

He and his wife Mary have lived in Chapel Hill since 1970. They have three grown children and eight grandchildren.

SIMPLE IDEAS DRAW WILDLIFE TO TRAIL

One good tug on the board with a long steel rod, and there was Ranger Brian Bockhahn's prize. Lying coiled where a corner of the board had been, a mole king snake seemed immobilized by the sunlight and the interruption of his nap.

"There's a species of snake that you'd just never see if you weren't flipping boards like this," Bockhahn said. "All of this was started primarily for the mole snake and the green tree frog, and I thought, 'Hey, I'll just have a trail.'"

About four years and a dozen Eagle Scout projects later, the Sandling Beach Wildlife Trail at Falls Lake State Recreation Area has more than three dozen stops where wildlife – some of it quite rare – is attracted and can be spotted and studied.

The concept is simple and elegant.

Snakes, for example, like few things better than to crawl under an old board. So, Bochhahn cut some squares of heavy waferboard and spread them around in an abandoned farm field near the lake at the edge of a wooded area.

Bockhahn flips one of the many boards on the wildlife trail.

Want to see green tree frogs? If they can't find their favored bamboo stems in which to snooze during the day, they'll settle for a short length of pvc pipe jammed into the ground. The trail has about 30 pipes scattered in a boggy area behind a lake cove.

Very simple, recycled items can be used to attract wildlife.

And, monitoring that wildlife can provide useful data for serious zoological study.

Those are the lessons that Bockhahn tries to impress on students, scouts and even other young rangers who visit the trail. Bockhahn is using the trail as the centerpiece of six-hour advanced interpretive training sessions. And, triumphs such as the mole snake are added to the natural resources database of the state parks system.

The trail is only about one and a half miles long, but loops through a surprising variety of habitats. It takes about an hour for a ranger to cruise through on foot to see if anything unusual or interesting pops its wild head out of the woods.

Bockhahn had the idea soon after arriving as a new ranger at Falls Lake. The Raleigh area's colony of would-be Eagle Scouts provided the labor. Each Eagle Scout candidate must complete a resource-oriented project to earn the rank.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Johanna Hicks, a student at South Granville High School, helps by searching for green tree frogs in pvc pipes.

Wildlife

Continued from Page 4

"It would have taken me many more years to do what all these scouts have done together," he said.

There are about two dozen different styles of wooden boxes. Scouts built mason bee blocks drilled with tiny nesting holes that attract the pollinators. They built kestral boxes and prothonotary warbler boxes and great crested flycatcher boxes, all with slight variations that to the rare birds, mimic tree cavities. Screech owl boxes were mounted by a scout with a portable hunting tree stand, and a girl scout built a bat roost box.

One scout built a staircase with $4,000 in lumber donated by Progress Energy Inc. Another is seeking $2,000 in donations for an overlook.

Trail attractions can be as elaborate as a 30-foot-tall chimney swift roost (that understandably mimics an old chimney) or as simple as a coffee can sunk into the earth to trap insects. It's known as a pitfall trap.

Even piles of rocks or brush or dirt can attract creatures, so the trail has a "pile zone."

One of Bockhahn's latest ideas is old carpet nailed to a rotting log. Looks just like moss to some creatures that can be spotted or counted or studied when someone lifts a corner.

"You can always see a new thing or new technique to add to the trail," he said. "A lot of it's stuff that other biologists use, and a lot of it is stuff anyone can use in their backyard to improve habitat."

Land coalition seeks $1 billion bond vote

A particular sense of urgency pervaded Land and Water Conservation Day at the N.C. General Assembly June 14.

Representatives of conservation organizations – under the umbrella of the new Land for Tomorrow Coalition – were bent on convincing legislators to place a $1 billion bond referendum for land conservation on the November ballot.

Under the coalition's plan, the bulk of the bond money, in increments of $200 million over five years, would be channeled through three state conservation trust funds to buy land for parks, recreation facilities, legacy forests, working farms, game lands, river corridors and historic landmarks.

Companion bills had already been introduced on both sides of the legislature (House Bill 2827 and Senate Bill 1907).

David Knight, a lobbyist for The Nature Conservancy told the group, "We believe we have the rank and file members of the legislature in support. What we need to do is encourage the leadership to take it up."

Bond supporters appeared to be most concerned that legislators would worry that there wasn't time to consider the bill in this year's short session with members anxious to hit the campaign trail. Added to that is lingering concern about the amount of additional debt that the state should incur in the wake of budget shortfalls over the past few years.

Land and Water Conservation Day has emerged as an annual rite in recent years, giving conservation-minded citizens a convenient way to discuss issues with their legislative delegations. In past years, other issues were the centerpiece, such as full funding of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

The Land for Tomorrow Coalition is a consortium of environmental groups, health professionals, community groups and business groups. It maintains that the state's economic health, public health and quality of life are dependent on land conservation and the improvement in water quality that conservation brings.

The bond legislation as originally introduced would use as a conduit the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Each was established for specific purposes, but some land conservation projects involve all three. A current example is the new state park under development in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

The legislation would also set aside some funding specifically for preservation of farms and working forests as well as a new Landing Jobs Initiative.

The Steward...

...is always ready to consider submissions about the events and personalities in our state parks. Contact the Public Information Office (715-8709)

Aydlett gets Long Leaf Pine honor

Timothy L. Aydlett, an educator in northeastern North Carolina for the past 37 years and a member of the Parks and Recreation Authority, has been recognized with North Carolina's Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the state's highest civilian honor.

The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, signed by Gov. Mike Easley, is presented to outstanding North Carolinians who have a proven record of service to the state.

"Tim has been a leader in the classroom, in school administration, on the athletic fields and in the communities of northeastern North Carolina," said Rep. Bill Owens, who nominated Aydlett for the award and who has known him since they were high school classmates.

Owens added, "This award recognizes Tim for his commitment to enhancing education and creating opportunities for young people, for his countless hours serving as a volunteer for countless civic organizations and his passion and hard work in protecting the natural resources across our great state."

Aydlett graduated from Elizabeth City High School and later earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Mars Hill College and a master's degree in administration and supervision from East Carolina University.

He began his career teaching biology and history at Camden County High School and later served as principal and assistant principal at several northeastern high schools. He recently retired as the principal of Hertford Grammar School.

Aydlett is past president of the Pasquotank County Wildlife Club, past director of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, past co-chairman of Ducks Unlimited and has been a member of a variety of local civic organizations. He is also a charter member of the park advisory committee for Dismal Swamp State Natural Area.

Lewis Ledford, left, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation presents Aydlett with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.

He was appointed to the Parks and Recreation Authority in 2004 by Senate President Marc Basnight. The North Carolina General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches.

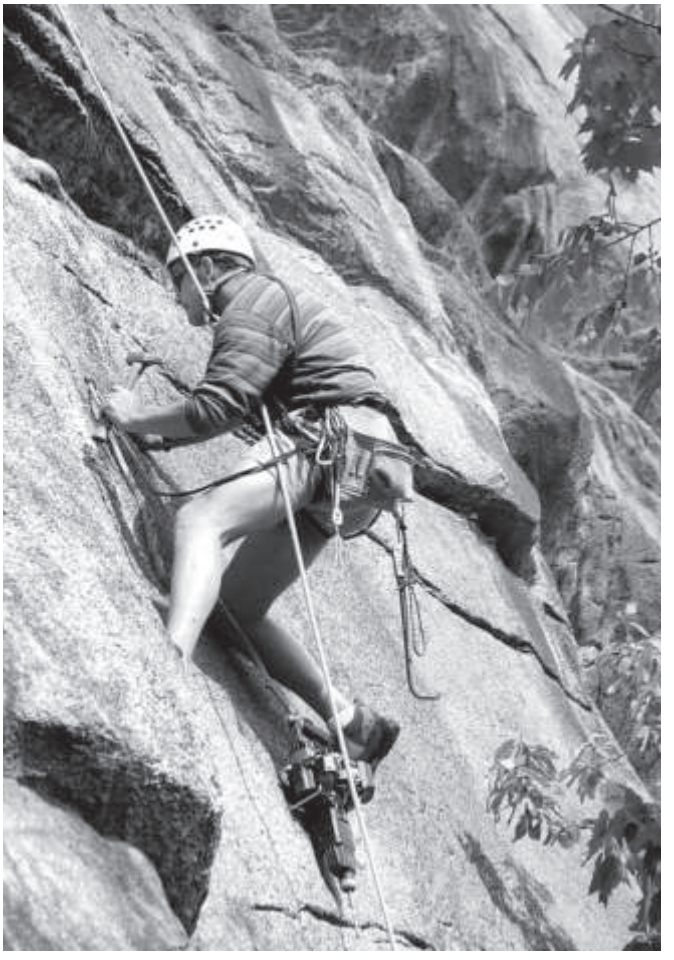
The authority, an 11-member appointed board, was created to allocate trust fund proceeds to the state parks and to the grants program for local governments.

"Tim's diverse background, his commitment to conservation and his outstanding professional background make him a valuable asset on the authority and have enabled him to serve with distinction," said Lewis R. Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, who presented the order to Aydlett at a retirement party in May on behalf of Gov. Easley and Rep. Owens, who was not able to attend due to a previous engagement.

Hammocks Beach award

Park Superintendent Paul Donnelly, left, and Ranger Sam Bland display an Outstanding Environmental Award given to Hammocks Beach State Park by the Onslow County Keep Onslow Beautiful program. The park was recognized for habitat restoration, habitat preservation and a stormwater discharge project. Onslow's program is part of the Keep America Beautiful program.

Swing Time



Above, climbers get a stunning view of Stone Mountain State Park. At right, Terry Dash of N.C. State University takes hammer and power drill to a popular climbing route. (Photos by Emily Parisher.)

Volunteers aid climbers, mountain

By Marshall Ellis
Mountain Region Biologist

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES

It's not unusual for visitors to Stone Mountain State Park to look up and see rock climbers tethered to ropes hundreds of feet off the ground as they toil up the steep, smooth south face.

After all, this lump of granite is known far and wide as a premiere rock climbing area that attracts an international cast of climbers who come to test their mettle.

What is unusual is for visitors to see climbers wielding pry bars, hammers and power drills. But, that's exactly what visitors saw May 12 when volunteers from the Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) arrived to put the finishing touches on a project that will enhance climber safety and also protect the integrity of this National Natural Landmark.

Using skilled volunteers, the CCC surveyed all of the state parks system's rock climbing areas and systematically upgraded the anchors on which climbers rely for securing themselves and their ropes during ascents.

In some instances, this meant replacing the more familiar pitons that have been driven into cracks. In other instances, most notably the smooth surface of Stone Mountain, this meant replacing poor quality expansion bolts that were inserted into holes drilled by climbers.

First scaled in 1965, there are now nearly 70 designated climbing routes across the south face of Stone Mountain. The routes sport fanciful names such as Storm in a Teacup, Fleet Feet, Yankee Go Home and Strawberry Preserves, and with its easy access and southern exposure, Stone Mountain has emerged as one of the south's most popular climbing spots.

Stone Mountain's climbing reputation comes largely as a consequence of its geology, which left it largely bereft of cracks and ledges. In their place is a vast expanse of

Continued on Page 11

New Parks for a New

Progress continues on four new s

Mayo River

More than 1,700 acres have been acquired or are in the closing process for the new Mayo River State Park in western Rockingham County.

The park was authorized by the General Assembly in 2003, due in large part to local activism by the Dan River Basin Association.

The association and the Piedmont Land Conservancy have been active partners in identifying potential land acquisitions and gathering support from local governments and civic organizations.

The proposed park concept area for the park reaches from the North Carolina-Virginia border south to just above the town of Mayodan, a 12-mile stretch of the river corridor. Along this route, the river is quite scenic and offers exceptional canoe/kayak recreation potential.

Land acquisition has centered on two areas – a former mill recreation facility known locally as Old Mayo Park just north of Mayodan, and parcels of land near the Virginia border. This river park will likely have two or more recreation "nodes" along the 12-mile stretch.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund has set aside money to develop interim facilities at the Old Mayo Park site. The park contains structures of historic significance designed by architect Antonin Raymond.

The $1.6 million trust fund allocation will pay for period restoration of Raymond's picnic shelter and cooking shelter, renovation of an existing residence as a ranger contact station and infrastructure including an entrance road, parking area, utilities and toilets.

The initial staff of four – superintendent, ranger, maintenance mechanic and office assistant – will likely be in place later this year.

Haw River

Haw River State Park, along with a similar project on the Mayo River, were the first new state parks to be authorized after being identified as potential sites in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative.

The park was authorized in 2003 by the General Assembly and is taking shape in the Brown's Summit vicinity along the Rockingham-Guilford county line north of Greensboro. The Guildford Open Space Committee and the Piedmont Land Conservancy are active partners in development of the park.

The Haw River area is attractive as a potential state park site because of natural resource features, especially wetlands, and proximity to the Triad area, which is somewhat underserved by the state parks system.

In late 2003, the system purchased the first tract of 82 acres. And in mid-2005, took possession of the 210-acre Summit conference center from the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. The 25-year-old facility is being transformed into the state parks system's first residential environmental education center.

Situated on rolling woodlands, the camp-style center has a six-acre lake, amphitheater, ropes course, miles of walking trails, gymnasium, swimming pool and lodge with food service. It has sleeping accommodations for 180. The Haw River Program currently offers residential and day camp-style education courses and group activities.

The Summit at Haw River State Park will augment education and interpretive programs offered in all the state parks and will serve as a training facility for the Division of State Parks and other state agencies.

Meanwhile, the land acquisition process for Haw River State Park continues.

CENTURY...UPDATE '06

TATE PARKS AUTHORIZED SINCE 2003

HICKORY NUT GORGE

Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in western Rutherford County was authorized in the 2005 session of the General Assembly, making it one of the newest state park projects.

Although a relatively small amount of acreage has been acquired by the state thus far, a considerably larger area has been set aside with the help of partners such as The Nature Conservancy and the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy. Eventually, the park could grow to 5,000 acres or more.

Currently, attention is focused on two areas: the World's Edge tracts on the gorge's south side; and Rumbling Bald Mountain along the northern wall of the gorge. The division expects to acquire at least 1,600 acres in the World's Edge area by the end of 2005. This property offers a series of waterfalls along Pool Creek and stunning scenery at the very edge of the piedmont.

About 850 acres along the crest of Rumbling Bald, a popular spot for climbing, is being held by The Nature Conservancy, and nearby tracts are being considered for the park.

Hickory Nut Gorge scored among the highest of 47 sites originally listed in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative in terms of recreation potential and biological significance. With 36 rare plant species and 14 rare animal species – such as the white irisette, golden dome goldenrod and pygmy shrew – the gorge is one of the most significant centers of biodiversity in the state. The spectacular cliffs, fissure caves and unusually rich soils create a cluster of important natural heritage sites.

All three of the state's conservation trust funds – Parks and Recreation, Clean Water Management and Natural Heritage – are involved in financing the land acquisitions.

CARVERS CREEK SANDHILLS

Due to the careful stewardship of The Nature Conservancy, the Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park in Cumberland County will have as its centerpiece one of the finest examples of long leaf pine habitat in the country.

The conservancy purchased a 1,172-acre tract near US 401 north of Fayetteville in 2001. With an aggressive prescribed burning program, it has maintained and improved important habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker as well as that of the Bachmann's sparrow, fox squirrel, bobwhite quail, Atlantic white cedar and Hessel's hairstreak butterfly.

That tract has been combined with an adjacent 221-acre property, and other tracts in the vicinity are being considered for the state park that was authorized by the General Assembly in 2005.

To this point, funding has been provided by a Natural Heritage Trust Fund grant and by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund through certificates of participation – a financing instrument similar to bonds.

The Nature Conservancy will continue to manage the property until division staff is assigned to the new state park.

Beyond their role as critical long leaf pine habitat, the Carvers Creek acquisitions are also important buffers against development along the perimeter of Fort Bragg.

Additional property will be necessary to develop facilities, but ultimately Carvers Creek Sandhills will likely offer the full range of state park recreation opportunities including camping, hiking and picnicking.

PARK FRIENDS NOW 'DUNE HUGGERS'

By Sarah Downing
Friends of Jockey's Ridge

The Friends of Jockey's Ridge is fortunate that a casual conversation led to an idea that will be a part of the friends group for years to come. It all started on an oceanfront construction site at Nag's Head.

Billy Moseley, president of the friends group, was explaining his involvement with the organization and describing his role and the function of the Friends of Jockey's Ridge to his coworkers. As he walked away from his "audience" he heard carpenter Trevor Mullikin call out, "You know what you are? You're a DUNE HUGGER!!"

Now Moseley is fond of ideas and can spot a good one. Everybody on the job site had heard and witnessed the origin of the Dune Hugger moniker and thought it witty.

But Moseley's mind was already at work, realizing that it could be something to give identity to the Friend of Jockey's Ridge as well as to become the basis for a new line of products for the friends' gift shop.

Reeling around, he called to Mullikin, "Hey, I like that. Can I use that?" and the Dune Hugger line was born.

Billy next contacted Shawn O'Neill at Graphic Solutions who created lettering and Mike Stokes at Flying Fish Tee Shirt Company who took O'Neill's lettering design and created a logo.

"Dune Hugger" t-shirts at $14.95 and stickers at $1 went on sale in April in the friends' gift shop inside the park's visitor center. The t-shirts are already outselling some other popular designs. Hats and other merchandise are in the works.

Gift shop sales brought in more than $16,000 for the state park in 2003, and the friends group uses those funds to buy special amenities for the park and to augment the dozens of free interpretive programs presented every week. The friends have provided such items as kayaks, computers, binoculars and kite-making kits.

The organization is one of the oldest and one of the largest of the many friends groups that have adopted state parks in that fashion.

Park Superintendent George Barnes said, "We can't even count the ways the friends have come through for us."

Barnes said that, with a little luck, the "Dune Hugger" line could eventually become as popular along the beachfront as the ubiquitous oval "OBX" stickers that promote the Outer Banks.

Jockey's Ridge has logged more than a million visitors a year, making it the most visited attraction on the Outer Banks, and most of those visitors are anxious to take home a souvenir, he said.

"I'm hoping that 'Dune Huggers' will help create greater awareness of the park and the friends as well as boost membership and become a vehicle to sell more merchandise in the gift shop," said Moseley, who was presented one of the first t-shirts as a gift.

"What a great way for people to show support for Jockey's Ridge State Park and the Friends of Jockey's Ridge."

TOURISM DAY

Legislators look over exhibits from the state parks system during an annual Tourism Day event May 16. Interpretive specialists Kelly Hoover and Marie Bouchard manned a booth at the Legislative Building in Raleigh during the event that spotlighted tourism efforts throughout the state.

Natural Areas

Continued from Page 1

such sensitive ecosystems are usually added to the system as state natural areas, which differ from state parks in management style. Some recreation uses are not permitted in particularly sensitive natural areas, and conservation is given a very high priority.

The legislation is aimed at protecting the Sugar Mountain and Pineola bogs in Avery County. The Trust for Public Land is assisting in negotiations for 102 acres at Sugar Mountain with a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

And, the division hopes to acquire about 100 acres of the Pineola bog with help from The Nature Conservancy.

If the acquisitions are successful, those two bogs would likely be managed as one state parks system unit along with the Beech Creek bog that was acquired in 2003.

Mountain bogs are wetlands that support a variety of rare and unique species, but which are highly vulnerable to development because they are level sites in the mountain terrain.

Rare species identified at the sites include the bog turtle, bog fern, cranberry, gray's lily, large, purple-fringed orchid, purple-leaf willowherb, four-toed salamander and Baltimore checkerspot.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund has approved a grant that will help fund acquisition of 2,206 acres of savanna at Sandy Run along the boundary of Pender and Onslow counties. The Nature Conservancy owns the site and is willing to continue management under a memorandum of agreement.

Savannas are renowned for extraordinary plant diversity and high numbers of rare species, and Sandy Run is also strategically located as a military base buffer at the edge of Camp LeJeune. It also adjoins Holly Shelter and Angola Bay game lands.

Rare species at the site includes Venus flytrap, golden sedge, red-cockaded woodpecker, Cooley's meadowrue, yellow fringeless orchid, Carolina goldenrod and rough-leaf loosestrife.

Climbers

Continued from Page 7

devilishly smooth granite.

Here, climbers trade brawn for brains – balance and technique are needed to ensure safe passage on edges and scoops that are vanishingly small. And as if that weren't enough, there are perilously few places to anchor a climber or rope.

It is not uncommon to face unprotected stretches of 30 feet or more, meaning that climbing Stone Mountain is neither for the inexperienced or faint-of-heart.

Most of the original anchors on these routes dated from the early 1970s and included homemade equipment and poor quality masonry construction bolts. By the mid-1990's, most of these anchors were well past their useful life and many were broken or unreliable.

The combination of difficult climbing and questionable anchors combined to rattle the nerves of even the most seasoned alpinists, and in the late 1990's, the CCC approached the parks system with an offer to upgrade the entire system.

The result has been a cooperative program that sets a standard in the climbing world. Work is now complete on Stone Mountain's south face, where the CCC replaced nearly 300 aging anchors with high quality stainless steel anchors made specifically for mountaineering.

Marshall Ellis attaches anchor on sheer face.

Similar projects have taken place at Pilot Mountain and Crowders Mountain. The new anchors mean that climbers will stay safe for a long time to come and our parks will be spared the proliferation of unauthorized and inadequate anchors that has plagued other climbing areas throughout the country.

Volunteers ply rakes and Pulaski tools to reroute a portion of the Sycamore Trail at William B. Umstead State park. A few blisters and bee stings didn't diminish the enthusiasm of the group.

Trails Day

Continued from Page 1

benefits of National Trails Day extend beyond the actual work completed.

"It gives people a good opportunity to appreciate the trails here and how they came to be here initially," Duke said.

"Part of our mission statement is to instill a sense of stewardship in the citizens of North Carolina. This is a good opportunity to make them feel involved in the stewardship of the park and in making something for everybody else to enjoy."

Duke said that REI has always been heavily involved in trail day activities and is unusually good at marshalling volunteers.

Duke used Umstead Coalition members as lieutenants to help teach first-time volunteers the techniques of building footpaths – keeping it level, buttressing it with rocks and allowing for rainwater to drain.

As part of a team rerouting a section of the trail, a sweating Adam Ledford stopped for a second and acknowledged how grubbing a trail is a great way to get a lot of exercise quickly.

"I'm just trying to get in the team swing of things," said Ledford, an employee of REI's Durham store. "The turnout for this day has been really awesome. Everybody's responding really well this year to our service projects in the parks."

The theme for National Trails Day 2006 was "Experience Your Outdoors", and South Mountains State Park scheduled a "volksmarch" event for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians to enjoy the many miles of trails in the largest state park. Likewise at Medoc Mountain State Park, rangers led a special trails day hike across the Bear Swamp Creek Bridge.

Eno River State Park and Elk Knob State Natural Area scheduled projects for volunteers including work on rerouting the steep summit trail at Elk Knob.

At Falls Lake State Recreation Area, Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail had plans to host a long workday of

Continued on Page 13

Volunteers are briefed on the work to be tackled. Nearly 100 volunteers came to William B. Umstead State Park.

Cyclists ride to protect mark's Creek

Dozens of bicyclists were to ride through a portion of eastern Wake and western Johnston counties on National Trails Day to raise awareness for a large-scale conservation project in that area.

The Triangle Land Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust, chose the 7,500-acre area known as Mark's Creek straddling the county line as the site of its inaugural "Ride for the Land" bike tour.

Mark's Creek, a Neuse River tributary, is largely surrounded by farm fields, hardwood swamps and pine forests. But, planned highway projects are expected to open the area to subdivisions and other bedroom community development.

The conservancy wants to create a large swath of public land in the Mark's Creek area that would be an important complement to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail as it extends eastward from Falls Lake State Recreation Area.

In the past year, the conservancy has partnered with Wake County and the Trust for Public Land to purchase 482 acres. With open space bond funding, Wake County recently bought 119 acres of forestland and fields for about $2.7 million and another 114 acres for $2.4 million.

Acquiring tracts in rural Johnston County has been more difficult, said Doug Nicholas of the conservancy. "It's been a little slower than expected, but that's the nature of land conservation acquisitions.

Timbers had to be hauled several hundred yards to the site.

Trails Day

Continued from Page 12

trail maintenance.

National Trails Day, celebrated across the country, was started in 1993 by the Washington, D.C.-based American Hiking Society.

"It started as a day to get outdoors and celebrate trails and human-powered recreation," said Ivan Levin, National Trails Day coordinator for the society. "The first year, there were probably 100 or so events around the country. In 2005, there were 1,132 trail day events with attendance of more than 121,000. We keep increasing. People are taking more of an active interest in their public lands."

Falls Lake trail designated

A 26-mile segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail at Falls Lake State Recreation Area has been designated as a federal National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The announcement coincided with the 14th annual celebration of National Trails Day June 3. More than 1,100 locally organized activities took place throughout all 50 states including hikes, educational programs, bike rides, volunteer repair projects and trail dedications.

"The new trails joining the National Recreation Trail System illustrate the diversity of the country's pathways," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

"These remarkable resources provide outdoor recreational opportunities that include the chance to hike the rolling tundra of Alaska's backcountry, paddle an urban waterway in Milwaukee, bike an abandoned railway in Utah, ride an equestrian trail in Virginia or wander along a nature loop in Oklahoma."

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail segment was among 36 trails designated in 24 states, adding more than 800 miles of trails to the system.

Amen Corner

From a park visitor to Karen Wilson, office assistant at Eno River State Park

Dear Karen,

I just wanted to send you this small note to thank you and the staff at Eno River for directing me to such a wonderful outdoor exploration. Having never been to the Eno State Park before not only did I not know how to get there I had no idea of what to expect. It is a beautiful park and me, my girlfriend, and the labrador had the most scenic and enjoyable adventure.

Not only was the park clean but the network of trails was very navigable, and that is a testimony to the hard work and dedication of Eno's crew. We will be back - you can count on that. Thank you guys again for such a beautiful and enjoyable time. You guys really do run a lovely park.

Sincerly, Dan Rosato

From a former trails volunteer to Superintendent Dave Cook at Eno River State Park

I'm writing to say that I really, really like the new trail running downstream from Pump Station trail. I was surprised that the river was so untouched and that there was that much park on that stretch. The trail covers a nice variety of terrain and passes through some interesting traces of human activity. (The iron hand pump at the home site and the mill-race and mill-stone at the downstream terminus were a lot of fun to "discover".) My compliments to the folks that chose the route.

I was also really impressed with the amount and quality of the trail work. All that side-hilling must have taken some doing. The overall quality of the trail work was really nice. I think that a lot of erosion problems have been eliminated before they could even start, in spite of the sometimes steep terrain.

Great job. Thanks!
Alex van Nievelt

To staff at Crowders Mountain State Park

This weekend my son and I went to Crowder's Mt. St. Park to camp overnight. It was one of the most fun experiences we've had. The park was beautiful. Everyone we met on the trails was nice. Your staff has worked to keep the park very clean and perfect for camping. The wood was ready and close by for our fire. I just can't say enough about our time there. Thank you very much and we will be back often!

Sincerely, Scotty Sells and Nicholas McCallum

To: Supterintendent Chris Helms at Lake Waccamaw State Park

My grandson, Alex Edwards, celebrated his 8th birthday with a party at beautiful Lake Waccamaw State Park today. Park ranger Shane Freeman did an outstanding job with the Scavenger Hunt & Alligator Program. Not only was it a fun day but it was educational as well. All of the guests had a wonderful time. The parents of the children all commented on what an excellent job park ranger Freeman did. He was great with the children. They all loved him. It was a wonderful experience to be able to have Alex's birthday party at the park. The receptionist (I'm not sure of her title) Nicole was cordial and helpful also. They truly are an asset to the park. I just want to say thank you for allowing us to have the party at the park. Park ranger Freeman truly made one little boy's birthday very happy or in Alex's own words, " Grandmama this was the best birthday party ever!" Kudos to park ranger Freeman!

Sincerely, Mary Edwards

To Superintendent James Sessoms at Lumber River State Park

My boyfriend and I visited the Lumber River State Park. It was the most amazing visit we have ever had. Ranger N.C. Lee was very helpful in telling us good places to canoe and where to buy canoe supplies. He even showed us a better way to carry the canoe on the truck and even taught us a new knot "the trucker".

He was friendly and always willing to answer a question. We plan to add an extra visit to Lumber River because of him.

Sincerely, Debby Clark

North Carolina State Parks
Monthly Attendance Report
May, 2006

PARK	MAY 2006	TOTAL YTD MAY 2006	MAY 2005	TOTAL YTD MAY 2005	% CHANGE (2005/2006) MAY	YTD
Carolina Beach	23,208	87,114	27,948	95,588	-17%	-9%
Cliffs of the Neuse	9,967	34,404	12,338	35,382	-19%	-3%
Crowder's Mountain	34,041	152,078	34,603	148,606	-2%	2%
Eno River	31,839	123,346	35,458	130,912	-10%	-6%
Falls Lake	176,645	343,932	154,924	298,194	14%	15%
Fort Fisher	71,550	238,143	86,261	254,397	-17%	-6%
Fort Macon	136,130	417,798	141,450	401,806	-4%	4%
Goose Creek	10,660	42,439	15,999	56,769	-33%	-25%
Gorges	7,688	22,399	13,490	35,368	-43%	-37%
Hammocks Beach	16,917	45,513	18,183	46,872	-7%	-3%
Hanging Rock	45,364	143,132	42,222	110,415	7%	30%
Jockey's Ridge	102,935	277,277	121,310	271,940	-15%	2%
Jones Lake	12,766	25,916	9,697	29,997	32%	-14%
Jordan Lake	103,785	291,979	206,657	524,233	-50%	-44%
Kerr Lake	118,580	352,676	297,428	587,748	-60%	-40%
Lake James	56,047	157,825	21,642	141,015	159%	12%
Lake Norman	51,774	189,135	54,483	177,420	-5%	7%
Lake Waccamaw	9,992	38,422	15,792	34,464	-37%	11%
Lumber River	7,355	29,560	6,966	21,831	6%	35%
Medoc Mountain	6,100	19,085	5,336	15,422	14%	24%
Merchant's Millpond	19,652	73,262	28,076	87,124	-30%	-16%
Morrow Mountain	38,660	118,302	19,840	62,060	95%	91%
Mount Jefferson	8,084	22,964	7,672	24,428	5%	-6%
Mount Mitchell	31,438	49,121	25,451	41,024	24%	20%
New River	38,924	73,574	12,436	33,831	213%	117%
Occoneechee Mountain	5,232	24,840	6,030	21,605	-13%	15%
Pettigrew	8,356	28,314	9,611	27,831	-13%	2%
Pilot Mountain	37,291	134,818	47,074	143,596	-21%	-6%
Raven Rock	10,538	42,157	11,888	47,278	-11%	-11%
Singletary Lake	2,914	13,554	3,910	13,512	-25%	0%
South Mountains	21,890	78,372	22,000	84,480	-1%	-7%
Stone Mountain	38,936	138,448	41,108	127,296	-5%	9%
Weymouth Woods	4,231	19,633	4,013	18,563	5%	6%
William B. Umstead	55,828	238,649	56,306	230,482	-1%	4%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	**1,355,317**	**4,088,181**	**1,617,602**	**4,381,489**	**-16%**	**-7%**

8,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of $554.90 or $0.069 per copy.

Safety Zone

Go easy on your back

✓Respect your limitations. Get help with heavy or bulky loads that could result in a strain or a sprain.
✓Always size up a load before you try to lift it.
✓Remember the rules for safe lifting: use your legs, keep your back as straight as possible, and avoid bending and twisting.
✓Carry loads close to your body.
✓Push rather than pull a heavy load.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS
Naturally Wonderful
•1916• Celebrating 90 Years of Stewardship •2006•

The Steward
NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Public Information Office
1615 MSC
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615