Native Plant Roots in Raleigh

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new native plant garden at the Executive Mansion in Raleigh took place on October 26, 2017. First Lady Kristin Cooper partnered with Audubon NC, local Audubon chapters and participating nurseries, to plant over 1000 bird-friendly plants.

Portions of the new garden are shown on both sides of the steps. We look forward to watching it grow!

Audubon NC Executive Director Heather Hahn and First Lady Kristin Cooper are shown putting in final native plant. Quick note: Heather Hahn will be stepping down as Audubon NC executive director and will be assuming a position with the National Audubon.
Leading up to this event

Editor’s note, Cary Paynter helped in the editing of this and the previous write up, (correcting my assumptions and grammar) but any errors left over are entirely my doing.

Charley

The native plant movement in NC goes back at least as far as B. W. Wells, who wrote The Natural Gardens of North Carolina back in 1932. His attempt to raise money to save the Big Savanna near Burgaw was the beginning of an awareness of what NC stood to lose. The Native Plant Society began in 1951 as the NC Wild Flower Preservation Society and was closely connected to the NC Botanical Gardens. Using B. W. Wells’ book, the Botanical garden began planting native plant habitat gardens back in the 60’s and 70’s, actively educating the public on the importance of native plants. At this time frame, Audubon was not involved with native plants on any great scale.

Skip forward a number of years. The present Cape Fear Audubon Society was reactivated in 2007. One member of this group was Dr. Jamie Rotenberg of UNCW. Soon after reactivation, Jamie had a conversation with Andy Wood about needing bird-friendly habitats. Jamie, as the Conservation Chair of Cape Fear Audubon started writing a list of criteria for having a bird-friendly yard (habitat) based on one used at Kiawah Island SC. In November of 2008, Jamie recruited me to join the conservation committee. Just prior to that, Doug Tallamy’s 2007 book, Bringing Nature Home was published. When the Conservation committee first saw the book, everything came together. All of our bird-friendly ideas were reinforced by Doug’s book. Cape Fear Audubon knew they were on to something.

By 2010, the Bird-friendly habitat list of criteria was finished and was being used to evaluate and award folks that met the criteria. Cape Fear Audubon raised funds and had Dr. Tallamy come to Wilmington to speak in May of 2011. He has returned twice since then.

Along that approximate same time, in March of 2010, Lara Berkley and Cary Paynter formed the Southeastern Coastal Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society. It seems that several efforts were ongoing at the same time. In 2011, the Wilmington people were well into the importance of native plants for birds. At approximately the same time frame, Curtis Smalling and Kim Brand of Audubon NC began to connect the importance of native plants and bird survival. The Wilmington members and the State Audubon joined forces. Audubon NC wanted a Coastal Plain brochure to be available. Cary and Lara of the SE Coastal Native Plant Society helped with this effort. Many of the NC chapters followed suit and started promoting native plants for birds and Audubon NC went on to create the Piedmont and Mountain brochures. The National Audubon became aware of the importance of native plants to birds and began promoting the native plant ideas on a national scale.

One of the most helpful “tools” to result from this is the Plant Finder web site created by National Audubon: https://www.audubon.org/native-plants/

With this web site you enter your zip code and the native plants for your area are presented. You can further explore features of the web site by use of filters. For example, you can employ the shrub filter and just show native shrubs.

The tie in to the mansion event? It was a member of Audubon that knew the First Lady and her interest in the welfare of birds. This, of course, led to the discussion of native plants and her decision
to remove some invasives on the mansion property and plant natives. I like to believe that, since back in 2008, the Wilmington folks were in the lead of the current movement, we were largely responsible for the Audubon NC early involvement. This led to Audubon NC to do much native promotion and therefore causing the mansion event to happen when it did. (In my humble opinion- Charley)

Besides Jamie, Lara and Cary, other folks were a big part of this early effort. Alistair Glen had a native plant nursery nearby and gave instructions in various aspects of growing natives. His wife, Charlotte Glen was an NC extension agent and gave many talks on the advantages of natives. Duane Truscott had a backyard nursery and was a wealth of information which he readily shared. John Taggart of UNCW gave talks and classes on various aspects of natives. Also, as part of the education process, Lara and Cary brought in people monthly to lead walks or give classes.

P.S. Wilmington contingent at ceremony in Raleigh

Valerie Robertson of Going Green
Rachel Callaghan of Seahawk Audubon
Michael Abicht of SE Coastal Chapter of Native Plant Society (Shady character?)
Charley Winterbauer of Cape Fear Audubon/SE Coastal Chapter NPS
Debbie Winterbauer of Cape Fear Audubon
Natalie Fisher of Seahawk Audubon
David Paynter of Cape Fear Audubon (missing, left early)
Chimney Swifts at UNCW

Low Resolution image taken from video by Natalie Fisher. The faint dots are swifts. The actual estimated count going into the chimney was somewhere around 500. This image doesn’t begin to illustrate the fantastic sight of the Swifts going into the chimney. Very hard to count when they are going in at a very rapid rate. The Chimney is located at Hanover Hall on the campus of UNCW. Seahawk Audubon is planning to look into preserving the chimney for the Swifts.
Native Plant Festival

Big Turnout for Larry Mellichamp’s talk on Weird Natives.

Some folks strolling around the grounds at the Festival
For a series of pictures go to:
Discover The Wonders Of Birds (DTWOB)

For those that do not know, DTWOB had its beginning with Catherine and Jim Nesbit. Catherine and Jim Nesbit had created learning center displays which were used at Hog Island, Maine. Skip ahead. Ms. Claire McLaughlin, science teacher at Brunswick early college high school, had been working with CFAS at every backyard bird count day in February. She wanted to do more. From the August 28, 2013 State Pilot Article: “I wanted to get kids really excited about science, and birds are really accessible,” she said. “When you step outside, you see birds, so it’s a really easy in.” To get the project started, McLaughlin attended a Cape Fear Audubon Society meeting and spoke with president Charley Winterbauer. “And the rest is history,” she said.

CFAS connected Ms. McLaughlin with Catherine Nesbit who gave her the details of the Hog Island learning centers. The Pilot article continues and went on to describe the effect it had on the students (positive). Three of the students shown below

The State Port Pilot, Southport, NC, Wednesday, August 28, 2013

Project BIRD promotes literacy

Once CFAS was done with helping Ms. McLaughlin, it was decided that the concept should be expanded to take to other schools. DTWOB was created with many of CFAS members contributing their time by each creating a learning center. Total to date is ten displays. They are constantly being updated. An example of a current learning center is shown below with Catherine Nesbit showing the hollow bones from the display “Birds from the inside out”. Other learning
centers are shown in the background at one of the public DTWOB events. Mostly, the learning centers are taken into elementary schools at the 4th grade level.

DTWOB could not function without a great group of volunteers. The volunteers would not exist without the volunteer coordinator. Bob Roush was the coordinator for a long period of time until his work took precedence. Krys Ochota took over and is the present coordinator. It is not an easy task and Krys has been doing a tremendous job. But, as mentioned, DTWOB could not exist this past year without the 2017 Volunteers.

Topping the list are Catherine and Jim Nesbit, Bob Roush, and Krys Ochota. Here are the rest: Michael Abicht, Mary Austin-Smith, Nancy Buckingham, Beth Carter, Brenda Dixon, CJ and Debbie Downey, Natalie Fisher, Carolyn Fortner-Burton, Jim Holcomb, Joyce Huguelet, Mary Hultman, Jack Manock, Ellen Morin, Sally Myers, Alexis Roberts, Cynthia Rogers, Lynne Rupp, Beth Sheppard, Carter Tarrer, Dave Weesner and myself.

The volunteer recruiting was tested to its limit at the last event at Wrightsboro school. The way the event happens is one class of approximately 21 students come in to do DTWOB for one period. After a brief introduction, the children are split into groups of 3 and sent to each DTWOB learning center. For schools, seven centers are used. After an interval around 8 minutes, the timer signals for 1 minute to go and then the final signal. The children rotate to the next learning center. This goes on until the children have circulated through all of the learning centers. A small rest period happens before the next class arrives and it is repeated. At Wrightsboro, there were 4
classes. Krys split up the volunteers into two shifts of two classes each. For that, she had to recruit a lot of volunteers. The end result is about 100 students were exposed to many aspects of bird science. In the past, I have done a whole day of DTWOB and at the end, I could hardly speak. Two shifts is the answer but quite a recruitment job for Krys.

In summary, we believe we have reached at least 2,000 students in the past 3+ years. We are wondering if DTWOB has any long term influence on the student’s behavior towards nature and birds. Also, do the teachers change any of their teaching techniques? Working with UNCW, we are in the process of having a student take on a project of looking at the long term effect of DTWOB. This will entail the UNCW student interviewing DTWOB teachers and students to see if there are any behavior changes. We have 3 plus years of students and teachers to pick from. We will see and we hope for positive results.

**Building Blue Bird houses: Senior Project**

Tommy Fallen, high school student in Bolivia wanted to build Blue Bird houses as his senior project. He contacted CFAS for information and to serve as mentor for the project. CFAS gave him Blue Bird house parameters. He lives in Sunset Beach on a golf course, a perfect place for Blue Bird houses.
Motus update

Reminder: Motus is a set of towers used to capture information as a Motus banded bird flies nearby. It is much desired by researchers. Below is a map as previous published in the last Skimmer.

Note the huge gap in the Carolinas. CFAS approved the purchase of a Motus tower to place along our coast. Dr. Ray Danner of UNCW is installing one and is the leader of a consulting team that will determine where the CFAS purchased tower will be placed. We are waiting for the team of Dr. Danner, Dr. Rotenberg, Curtis Smalling, Dr. Emslie, Lindsay Addison and Walker Golder to make the recommendation.

Parting Shot

Denise Monahan with her friend, Rodney Roadrunner