



Fish and Wildlife Retiree Association

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2012



Charleston Reunion a Great Success

Over 100 of your retired colleagues and their spouses enjoyed the southern hospitality and cuisine of this charming ante-bellum city while sharing the camaraderie of friends from their working days.

In addition to munching on shrimp and grits and celebrating retirement in general, attendees were able to tour many of the local attractions, visit some very special natural resource areas, and hear some inspired presentations on topics near and dear to the hearts of those concerned about all things fish and wildlife.

Many of your fellow retirees arrived at the Francis Marion Hotel in historic Charleston the weekend prior to the official start of the festivities and were able to tour the city or visit the Audubon Society's Francis Beidler Forest. Located in the 45,000 acre Four Holes Swamp 50 miles west of Charleston, at 16,900 acres, this Audubon sanctuary is the largest remaining stand of virgin bald cypress and Tupelo gum trees in the world. Most of the bald cypress there are over 1,000 years in age and one is believed to be 1,500 years old, making it the second oldest in the country. Although cool for that part of the country, the weather that weekend was beautiful and those on the tour enjoyed themselves immensely.



Some of the crew pauses for a while at the Beidler Forest

Monday dawned bright and beautiful and, after introductory remarks by Board chairman Richard Coon and welcoming remarks from Bobby Pilch of the Charleston Visitors Bureau, Charleston Mayor Pro tem Dean Reigle, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Director John Frampton and FWS Region 4's Deputy Regional Director Mark Musaus, we were given an informative update on happenings within the Service by Deputy Director Rowan Gould. Attendees were then brought up to speed by Denny Holland and Gail Carmody on progress with our FWS grant to initiate a mentoring program to attract recruits to the field of natural resource conservation.

The afternoon session began with a tribute to Fish and Wildlife Service artist Bob Hines that included the issuance of postal cachet envelopes bearing a picture of the artist and containing a U.S. postal stamp originally designed by him. Ron Fowler had arranged for Postal Service workers to cancel these at the National Postal Museum Station. Historian Mark Madison and Dr. John Juriga, who had chronicled the artist's professional life, discussed his work at FWS and his extraordinary contribution to the public's enjoyment of wild creatures. Following that, Matt Perry described the recent celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge and Research Center and Charles Hasty provided his usual humorous but invaluable advice on how to best survive life after retirement.

Monday evening came the time to regale one another with inflated stories of our heroic exploits while in the active service or just to reminisce about "the good old days" at the Icebreaker Social. Many friendships were renewed and new ones established over drinks and hors d'oeuvres reflecting the local cuisine.



Steve Parry brought along some of his good California wine

Early morning showers and winds greeted us on Tuesday, forcing the cancellation of the tour planned for the open boat trip to Bulls Island in the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. While this was a blow for those hoping to get up close and personal with an alligator, the other tours clearly helped the participants get over their disappointment.

One of these other tours was a trip to the ACE Basin, so named for the three blackwater rivers it encompasses - the Ashepoo, the Combahee, and the Edisto (I didn't make those names up). The ACE Basin is one of the largest estuarine ecosystems on the Atlantic coast, comprised of some 350,000 acres that drain a significant portion of the Lowcountry Region surrounding Charleston. About 135,000 acres of the basin are protected in a vast public-private partnership that resulted when development pressures threatened to turn this incredible resource into roads and housing complexes. Within the basin also is the Grove Plantation, one of the best examples of the architecture that typified the plantation period of the 18th and early 19th century.

It is one of only three such plantation mansions in the area that survived the Civil War.

The other tour consisted of a visit to the Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery, the Charleston Tea Plantation, and the Irving family winery and distillery. At the hatchery, FWS staff filled us in on their mission, which is primarily to learn more on the several species they raise. Most impressive were the brood stock. We saw Atlantic sturgeon weighing in at well over 225 pounds, and Cobia and Red Drum that tip the scales at more than 50-75 pounds and 30-35 pounds, respectively. Ironically, the juvenile spawn of the Drum are extremely small and depend on oyster beds and reefs of oyster shells to hide from predators.

The Charleston Tea Plantation is the only such plantation in the United States and boasts that some of its root stock can be traced back to colonial times. However, instead of dumping tea in the harbor as was done in Boston to protest the tea tax, the colonists in South Carolina secured the plants that were being taxed by the British crown and began to raise them themselves in the colony, where soil and weather conditions were favorable to its cultivation.

At the winery, we learned that they produce wine from the only native American grape, the muscadine, which can be both white and red. It has a very distinct taste to it and is not commercially as popular, nationwide, as are some of the introduced varieties. Perhaps to make up for the smaller market for their wine, the Irvins decided to go into the distillery business, initially producing flavored vodkas such as "sweet tea vodka". These have become popular and so the family has expanded their business, now producing flavored rums, bourbons, and brandies as well. This author can attest to the appeal of their "Banana Pudding Brandy" and their "Peach Cobbler Brandy".

Wednesday morning found the participants listening to an extremely interesting and informative panel presentation on the local-state-federal partnerships that resulted in the preservation of the ACE Basin as well as three other such basin-wide conservation success stories along the South Carolina coast. Retired Charleston Ecological Service Field Office Supervisor Roger Banks chaired the panel which included talks by landowner and concerned citizen Charles Lane, Chairman of the ACE Basin Task Force, Craig Sasser, Refuge Manager at Waccamaw National Wildlife refuge, and Jay Herrington, current Field Supervisor of the Charleston Ecological Services Field Office. That was followed by a talk by Guest Speaker Fred Holland on "Partnerships in Practice".

The morning session was then closed out by a short business meeting open to all retirees at which time the membership was asked their opinion on proposed changes to the Association By-laws and for input on locations we should consider for the next reunion. The Board then approved the By-law changes and was given several suggestions to follow up on as to the site for the next reunion.

The short afternoon session featured Robert Dewey from Defenders of Wildlife providing us with his insights on what is going on in Washington as regards fish and wildlife issues and on the political climate that will certainly affect those issues. Retirees were then free to spend the rest of the afternoon touring historic Charleston or whatever other activity suited their fancy.

Wednesday evening's highlight was our Reunion Banquet and Silent Auction, preceded by a no host cocktail hour and music provided by the Charleston Plantation Singers, who gave us hand-clapping, toe-tapping renditions of a variety of spirituals that originated in the old South. The Francis Marion did a stellar job with the meals and the 100 plus guests went to bed that evening fully sated and many with new-found treasures for our silent auction.



Dinner at the Francis Marion

Our wrap-up the following morning was a celebration of the lives of our colleagues who had left this earth over the past year, with fond memories passed on to us by those who knew and worked with them.

All in all, this reunion was a great success, enjoyed by many, in a venue that's going to be tough to beat with the next get-together. Much of the success was due to the hard work of Event Chairman Denny Holland and his lovely wife, Kathy. Kudos also go to Roger and Gail Banks, local retirees who helped greatly in gathering donations for our raffle and auction, and for the logistical support provided by Region 4, the Charleston E.S. Field Office, and the Cape Romain Refuge and the Bears Bluff Hatchery staffs. A special thanks go to Marv Moriarty for his great photographic work. Links to all of the photos he took at the Charleston Reunion are below.

<http://gallery.me.com/MarvinM134/101982>

<http://gallery.me.com/MarvinM134/101987>

<http://gallery.me.com/MarvinM134/101999>

<http://gallery.me.com/MarvinM134/102000>

<http://gallery.me.com/MarvinM134/102014>

Thank You All.



Charleston 2012

Next Reunion

With the Charleston Reunion still fresh in our minds, your Board of Directors is contemplating our next get together. Currently we are focusing on Region 6 and a reunion most likely in late summer or early fall of 2013. Ideas that have surfaced include something in the Denver area, the Salt Lake City area, Missoula, Montana, or possibly the Spearfish, South Dakota area. However, we would like to hear from our members before we go too far in planning. *Do you have any ideas that we should consider?* Criteria should include proximity to a major airport, a site that could accommodate 100 to 150 attendees at reasonable rates, an interesting fish and /or wildlife attraction within a relatively short driving distance, and most importantly, something to entertain spouses who are not necessarily fish and wildlife devotees. Please, we would like to hear from you. You may contact any of your Board members on this topic.

Elections of New Directors

The results of our recent elections are in and the membership has chosen Bob Stevens, Mamie Parker, and Donna Stanek to serve three year terms on the Association's Board of Directors. In addition, to fill the remaining two years of the Board seat left vacant by the untimely passing of Director Ed Loth, your Board has appointed Bob Jacobsen. They join current Board members chairperson Judy Pulliam, vice chair, Larry Shanks, treasurer Steve Rideout, secretary/ scribe Jim McKeVitt, and Frank Cockrell. We know you will all wish them well in their new roles with the Association.

We cannot leave this topic without commenting on the valuable contributions of our outgoing Directors, Richard Coon, Denny Holland, and Bob Ruesink. They have kept this organization afloat and running smoothly for a good many years. Denny, in particular, was a founding member of the Retirees Association and he and Kathy were a driving force behind many of our reunions, including the one at Charleston. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for their past efforts and hope they continue to be active in Association matters well into the future.

Passing of Colleagues

Eugene W. "Gene" Braschler, 87, passed away on January 29, 2012 in Fairdealing, Missouri. Gene served during World War II with the U.S. Army Combat Engineers and, after the war, attended the University of Missouri, graduating in 1950. He began his career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at the Savanna Ordinance Depot in Black Hawk, Illinois and worked at stations in New Castle, Wyoming, at the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona, in Uvalde, Texas, Marion, Alabama, Washington, DC, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Tishomingo, Oklahoma, and in Regional offices in the Midwest and Southwest Regions. Gene retired in 1984 as the Assistant Director for Fisheries of the Southeast Region. Gene was predeceased by his wife of 53 years, Phoebe, and survived by his six children, and twelve grandchildren. Memorials may be made in Gene's name to the Current River Heritage Museum in Missouri.

Harold H. Burgess died on March 13, 2012 at the age of 94. He is survived by his children Thomas, Mary, and Barbara and was pre-deceased by his wife, Ruth. Born in Cedardale, Michigan, Harold served in the Civilian Conservation Corps before attending Michigan State University where he earned a Bachelors degree in Forestry and a Masters degree in Zoology. After a stint with the U.S. Army in Korea, he began his 30 year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1950, serving at four national wildlife refuges in the Missouri River - Mississippi River watershed (Upper Mississippi River NWR, WI, Union Slough NWR, IA, Squaw Creek NWR, MO, and Lacreek NWR, SD). He finished his Service career at the Kansas City, MO Area Office in 1980 but continued for another 30 years as a volunteer at various refuges, state parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. These included Laguna Atascosa, Lower Rio Grande, and Santa Ana NWRs. Throughout these 60 years, Harold's main passion was the Trumpeter Swan. His work with the Service was focused on preservation of swan nesting habitat and, after retirement, he volunteered with the Trumpeter Swan Society, serving on the Board of Directors with two terms as Board president. A memorial for Harold will be held on June 16, 2012 at 2:00 PM at The Valley Center in Weslaco, TX. In lieu of flowers, donations to The Trumpeter Swan Society would be appreciated. <http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org>

Jack Hallowell, former Public Affairs Officer in Region 6, and a well known historian, died on March 10, 2012 in Littleton, CO at the age of 91. Jack was born in Wilsall, MT and spent much of his childhood on an orchard helping his mother pick cherries and apples to keep the family afloat after his father died when Jack was about 10 years old. Jack earned a degree in journalism from the University of Montana in 1942 and, within the same month, was headed for World War II. Initially an infantryman, Jack was among the troops for the landings at Sicily and Salerno, but later assigned to document his unit's activities during the war. During his 511 days at or near the front, Jack saw service in Italy, France, and Germany and was there at the liberation of the infamous Dachau prisoner camp. After the war, Jack worked as a sports reporter, advertising director for the State of Montana, and speechwriter for the Governor of Montana. He also worked as a speechwriter in Washington, D.C. and Public Affairs Officer for EPA in Denver before joining the Fish and Wildlife Service. Jack's wife of 57 years, Betsy, preceded him in death. Services for Jack were held in Colorado but his body was returned for burial at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

Phillip Koscheka passed away on January 21, 2012 at age 65 after a courageous battle with liver cancer. Phil was born in Nanticoke, PA, served in the U.S. Army and worked with NASA prior to joining the Service in 1979. His entire FWS career was spent in the Division of Migratory Bird Management where he was an IT specialist and later Chief of the Branch of Information Technology Services. He was instrumental throughout his career in applying up-to-date computer technology to all facets of migratory bird work, including field aerial survey programs, harvest surveys, banding operations, and habitat assessments as well as supporting everyday office needs. He retired from the FWS in December 2010. He and his wife, Jackie, made their home in Waldorf, MD

Gale Monson passed away peacefully at his Albuquerque home on February 19, 2012 at the age of 99. Born in Munich, North Dakota, Gale studied the natural world throughout his life. From his early years on his parents' farm and for almost a century of living, this was his passion. He spent his professional life working for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Soil Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His work assignments took him to Albuquerque, Gallup, and Socorro, New Mexico; Parker, Yuma, and Tucson, Arizona; and Washington D.C. Gale served in the U.S. Army medical service corps in the Burma-India theater of operations during WWII. Gale loved the Sonoran Desert and spent the bulk of his life's work there, where he contributed greatly to its study. His greatest passion was ornithology, but he had an abiding love for the study of the natural world in its entirety. He co-authored several books: *The Birds of Arizona*, *The Desert Bighorn*, *The Birds of Sonora*, and *The Annotated Checklist of Arizona Birds*, among others. Gale influenced numerous people throughout his life and will live on in the hearts and memories of his family and many friends. Gale was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 54 years, Sally and is survived by his five children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held in Tucson on March 18, 2012. Contributions in his memory can be made to the Gale Monson Research Grant fund of the Arizona Field Ornithologists at: www.azfo.org/grants.html.

Arthur M. Wemmerus, 72, died on November 30, 2011 in Lecanto, Florida. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Arthur was a U.S. Army veteran and a 35 year career employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The last 20 years of Arthur's FWS career were spent with the Division of Refuges in Alaska. Arthur is survived by his sons Gary and Brian and his daughter Patricia.

M.S. (Stan) Zschomler passed away February 24, 2012 in Bismarck, North Dakota at the age of 78. Stan was born in South Dakota and, after growing up on his family's farm and serving in the U.S. Army, attended South Dakota State University, graduating in 1960 with a degree in Wildlife Management. During his 33 year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, he worked as a trapper, refuge manager, a biologist in the sea lamprey eradication program in the Great Lakes, and as a Field Supervisor in Ecological Services offices in Minnesota, Southern California, and the Dakotas. The latter part of his career was focused on endangered species, including least terns, clapper rails, piping plovers, and his proudest accomplishment, restoration of black-footed ferrets in South Dakota. He also worked on the Starkweather Watershed and Garrison Diversion projects and in wetlands protection efforts, epitomizing the ES philosophy "Save the Dirt". Stan was proud to be able to develop perpetual wetland and grassland easements on the family farm. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Johanna, and his two children, Daniel and Kristen.