

## Landowners Encouraged to Manage Wetlands for All Birds



*Drawdowns of managed wetlands expose large areas of mud flats which provide excellent foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds and other species.*

**S**horebirds and wading birds have long benefited from impounded wetlands managed for waterfowl, but some property managers are now actively integrating wetland management for all birds.

“A new era in migratory bird conservation arrived with the new century - integrated bird conservation involving all species,” says Craig Watson of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Atlantic Coast Joint Venture.

In 1999, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan’s Joint Venture launched a conservation planning effort for all birds across all habitats in five southeastern states.

Now known as the Southeastern Coastal Plain Bird

Conservation Initiative, the program works with bird experts in many agencies and organizations in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia.

Dean Harrigal, ACE Basin biologist for SCDNR, who has managed for shorebirds and wading birds for the past ten years on both Donnelley WMA and Bear Island WMA says that just a little extra effort and attention to details can greatly benefit many wetland birds.

In late winter Harrigal draws down some ponds so that the shallow water heats up faster and encourages the growth and reproduction of bottom dwelling invertebrates. Ponds are drawn down incrementally exposing one mudflat after another. Ponds can later be reflooded and the draw down process repeated several times. →



*Drawdowns in late summer concentrate small fishes and invertebrates that attract wood storks and many other species of wading birds and shorebirds.*

The shallow water and “bloom” of invertebrates provides important foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds and overwintering waterfowl preparing to migrate. At Bear Island with 27 ponds, Harrigal tries to maintain at least 50 acres of prime shorebird habitat throughout the spring migration, rotating drawdowns from pond to pond.

In wetlands managed primarily for dwarf spike rush, a late summer draw down not only encourages growth of the crop but also foraging habitat for fall migrants and local wading birds. Widgeon grass ponds, on the other hand, must remain flooded at this time of year to promote growth of that plant.

Late summer drawdowns can also be very important to juvenile wood storks just learning to forage on their own. The high concentrations of small fishes and invertebrates in very shallow water make it easier for these tactile feeders to locate prey.

Although a few private landowners and managers manage wetlands for other birds in conjunction with waterfowl, many do not, Harrigal says because they have little incentive to do so. Harrigal, Watson and representative of other agencies and organizations are available to provide technical assistance and offer advice on management for shorebirds and wading birds.

“Manipulating water levels, especially during the critical spring migration, can play a key role in supporting many bird species that have already lost much natural habitat to development,” Harrigal says.

For information and technical assistance in integrating wetlands management for all birds, contact Dean Harrigal with the S. C. Department of Natural Resources at (843) 844-8957; or Craig Watson with the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture of the S. C. Fish and Wildlife Service at (843) 727-4707. 

## Donnelley, Bear Island WMA’s named “Globally Important Bird Areas”

**T**he significant bird habitats maintained at Donnelley and Bear Island WMAs were recognized recently with a designation as one of 500 Globally Important Bird Areas by the national non-profit organization, American Bird Conservancy.

The program, supported in part by The Nature Conservancy and the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, identifies and helps protect a network of key bird habitats throughout the world.

More than 275 species of birds inhabit or migrate through the ACE Basin each year. The two SC Department of Natural Resources properties, totaling more than 20,000 acres, offer not only excellent bird habitat but also public access for those who enjoy watching birds.

Both Donnelley and Bear Island are open to the public for bird watching, photography and wildlife observation except on Sundays and during managed hunting seasons.

The American Bird Conservancy hopes that the designation of the first 100 Globally Important Bird Areas in the U. S. will further illustrate the importance of bird and habitat conservation across the country, and draw attention to the significance of these area for birds and the millions of people who visit them each year to bird watch - one of America’s most popular hobbies. 



*The aninga, a primitive, fish-eating bird, shown here drying its wings, is one of more than 275 species of birds that spend at least part of each year in the ACE Basin.*

# ACE Basin Landmarks

## Bear Island Windmill

*The windmill on the West Side of Bear Island WMA was manufactured by the Aeromotor Company of Chicago and erected in the 1920's by Ashley Pellum to pump well water for a steam driven sawmill. When the sawmill was dismantled, the windmill continued in use for many years supplying water to a nearby residence. The late Mr. Pellum served as Green Pond's local "well and pump man" into the 1980's.*



## Wiggins Train Station

*This small wooden structure served for many years as a freight storage building for the Seaboard Coastline Railroad which had a flag stop at Wiggins when the town was a thriving sawmill community with a post office, two stores and two schools to serve the many residents of the area.*



*The passenger train "Boll Weevil," which ran daily from Savannah to Charleston made regular stops at Wiggins during the heyday of the sawmill operation - 1900-1922. The railroad continued passenger and freight service into the 1940's.*

*After the railroad was abandoned, the building was moved to its present location at the entrance to Cheaha-Combahee Plantation.*

# ACE Basin Task Force Member Wins Canvasback Award

**J**ohn Frampton, one of the founding members of the ACE Basin Task Force, recently won the prestigious International Canvasback Award for his long-time efforts to protect both wetland and upland habitats in South Carolina.

Frampton is assistant director of development and national affairs with the S. C. Department of Natural Resources.

The International Canvasback Award is the highest presented by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. One award is given annually to an individual, a corporation, or organization, for exceptional long-term contributions to the North American Plan.

Past recipients include Sen. John Breaux of Louisiana, former Sen. John Chaffee of Rhode Island, Ducks Unlimited, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan is an international action plan to conserve migratory birds throughout the continent, with a goal to return waterfowl populations to their 1970's levels by conserving wetland and upland habitat.

The plan is a partnership of federal, provincial/state and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, private companies and many individuals, all working towards achieving better wetland habitat for the benefit of migratory birds, other wetland-dependant species and people.

Frampton served for 11 years on the North American Waterfowl Plan Implementation Committee of the International

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and just completed serving three and a half years as chairman of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture.

He served for eight years on the staff of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council; established a resident population of Canada geese in South Carolina; helped to establish new national wildlife refuges in South Carolina; and, serves on the U. S. steering committee for the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Frampton has negotiated land acquisition for tens of thousands of acres throughout the state with partners such as Ducks Unlimited, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan committee.

Some of those land acquisitions include the Jocassee Gorges, the ACE Basin Project, and numerous smaller tracts throughout the state. He has also secured millions of dollars for these and other land acquisitions, renovations, work facility designs and projects.

Frampton attributes his conservation successes to teamwork.

"I think this award reflects the conservation successes of this agency, not an individual," Frampton said. "Conservation successes require partnerships and team effort. These efforts in South Carolina have resulted in accomplishments that no single person could have envisioned or enacted." 

*John Frampton, assistant director of development and national affairs for the SCDNR, recently received the International Canvasback Award for his long-term efforts to protect wetlands and uplands in South Carolina.*



# Wetland Grants Awarded to Two ACE Basin Plantations

**T**he North American Wetlands Conservation Act has awarded small grants to both Nemours and Cheeha-Combahee plantations.

The grants are to be used for improvements of existing wetland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds. The program has provided funds for many similar ACE Basin projects in past years and is available for both public and private lands.

For more information, contact Craig Watson, assistant coordinator for the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture at (843) 727-4707 in Charleston. 



*North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants will be used this year to top dikes and make other improvements to wetlands at two ACE Basin plantations.*

## Public Lands in the ACE Basin

### **Bear Island WMA**

Hunting - Archery and gun hunts for deer; waterfowl hunting by drawing; dove and small game hunts also scheduled.\*

Fishing - Fish and blue crabs can be harvested from impoundments from April 1 to Sept. 30.

Camping - Primitive facilities available for deer hunters and conservation groups by appointment.

General Public Use - Designated areas open for bird watching, photography and wildlife observation from Jan. 21 through Oct. 31. Mon.-Sat.

### **Donnelley WMA**

Hunting - Archery and gun hunts (drawing only) for deer; waterfowl and turkey hunts by drawing; dove and small game hunts scheduled.\*

General Public Use - Designated trails; Mon.-Sat. 8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., closed on Sunday and during special hunts.

For more information on Bear Island WMA and Donnelley WMA call (843) 844-8957.

### **ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve**

Research - Support and facilities are provided for qualified scientists to study estuaries and coastal ecosystems.

Education - Education cruises, marsh classroom adventures, workshops and training sessions provided to organized groups.

General Public Use - Accessible by boat; primitive camping in specified areas; some restrictions.

For more Information call (843) 762-5400.

### **ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge**

Hunting - Archery, primitive weapons hunts for deer. Waterfowl hunts in designated areas.

General Public Use - Open for public use except during scheduled hunts.

For more information call (843) 889-3084.

Office hours - 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

(\* See SCDNR current Hunting and Fishing Rules and Regulations)

# Making the Conservation Incentives Act Work for You

**T**he tax credit established by the Conservation Incentives Act, which became effective June 1, 2001, provides an additional incentive to rural landowners to place easements on their property.

Under the act, individuals who place a conservation easement on their property will be entitled to a tax deduction (both state and federal) equal to the difference between the market value of the property before the easement was placed and afterwards.

Taxpayers may elect to claim a state tax credit of 25 percent of the deduction and the credit may be carried forward to succeeding years until all of the credit is claimed. In addition, credit may be transferred to a third party. The credit has a \$250 cap per acre and an annual cap of \$52,500.

Two examples:

A landowner placed a conservation easement on a 4500-acre plantation. An appraisal placed the value of the easement at \$1.8 million. The South Carolina income tax credit is \$450,000, which may be used by the

plantation owner or sold to one or more third parties. The maximum amount of credit that may be utilized by the owner in anyone year to offset state income tax is \$52,000.

A couple owns a vacation home and 20 acres on Edisto Island. They place a conservation easement valued at \$45,000 on the property. The state income tax credit is \$11,250 but the \$250 per acre cap reduces the credit to \$5,000.

Thus, the Act offers landowners looking for a way to preserve and protect their property with an option to decrease state income tax liabilities or generate cash flow through sale of the credit to a third party.

Landowners considering placing a conservation easement on their property should contact an attorney to assist with the legal details of this new program.

-Adapted from an article in *South Carolina Lawyer* by Scott Barnes, a lawyer with Warren and Sinkler, L.L.P. in Charleston, and State Rep. Chip Campsen (R-Charleston) who introduced the legislation. 

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## Botany Explorers Program Teaches Sea Turtle Biology

**S**ea turtle biology and the problems these threatened species face are the themes of a new educational program in the ACE Basin NERR.

The ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve, with the support of the Charleston Natural History Society and the Edisto Beach Property Owners Association, has launched a field education program that introduces students and teachers to sea turtle biology.

Participants in the Botany Explorers Program have the opportunity to witness nesting female turtles on the beach, in addition to learning about the natural history of these animals. A biologist from the SCDNR accompanies the group and provides information about the nesting process.

This chance of a lifetime has been well received by students, teachers, and volunteers. Participants in the evening programs walk about two miles, and when the ocean breeze falters, mosquitoes and sand gnats can be annoying, but participants agree that the program is worthwhile despite the discomforts.

“It’s an opportunity to not only learn about sea turtle biology, but the job of a field researcher,” says organizer, Meg Hoyle of DNR. “That’s where we got the name, Botany Explorers. The students explore the natural world as well as career opportunities.” 



*Students in the Botany Explorers Program watch intently as a loggerhead turtle lays eggs on the beach at Botany Bay Island.*



*The popular ACE Basin User's Guide brochure has recently been reprinted and updated with new features including the names of boat ramps. The free brochure can be picked up at Donnelley WMA and other area locations, or ordered by mail at SCDNR, 585 Donnelley Drive, Green Pond, SC 29446.*

## **Waterfowl Workshop to be Held October 16**

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Waterfowl Management Workshop, hosted this year by Pon Pon Plantation will be held Oct. 16. The workshop is sponsored by the ACE Basin Task Force.

For more information contact Ernie Wiggers, director of the Nemours Foundation, at (843) 846-2539.



*Construction of the new ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve's office and laboratory facility at Bennett's Point is scheduled for completion at the end of the year.*



# Conservation Sites

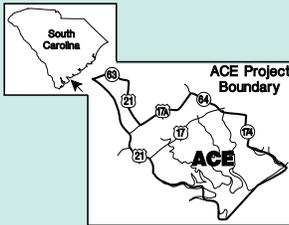
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## Public Sites

<b>Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (est. 1953)</b>	<b>12,055</b>
Springfield Marsh (1987), Sampson Island (1988), Cut Marsh (1989)	
<b>Donnelley Wildlife Management Area (1992)</b>	<b>8,048</b>
<b>ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge</b>	<b>11,062</b>
Bonny Hall Club (1990), Grove Plantation (1991), Bonny Hall Plantation (1992), Combahee Fields (1993), Jehossee Island (1991, 1999), Auldbrass Tract (1995)	
<b>ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve</b>	<b>10,218</b>
Warren Island (1988), Big Island (1988), Ashe Island (1989), Beet Island (1989), Otter Island (1993), South Williman Island (1994)	
<b>Edisto Beach State Park (est. 1936)</b>	<b>1,255</b>
<b>Hunting Island State Park (est. 1938)</b>	<b>5,000</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>47,638</b>

## Private Sites

<b>Conservation Easements (47)</b>	<b>53,862</b>
Botany Bay Island (1987), Hope Plantation (1988), Willtown Bluff Plantation (1990), Church Tract (1990), Cheeha-Combahee Plantation (1991), Richardson Tract (1992), Godfrey Tract (1991), McMillian Tract (1991), Pon Pon Plantation (1992), Ashpoo Plantation (1993), Fenwick Island (1993), Combahee Plantation (1994), Musselboro Island (1994), Oak Island (1994), Little Palmetto Island (1994), Prospect Hill (1995), Rose Hill (1995), Plum Hill (1995), Auldbrass Plantation (1995), Parker's Ferry Plantation (1995), Tomotley Plantation (1995), Auldbrass Club (1995), Ivanhoe (1996), Shell Point (1996), Lavington Plantation (1996), Raccoon Island (1996), South Fenwick (1996), Bolders Island (1997), Paul and Dalton (1997), Great Swamp (1998), Prescott Plantation (1998), Jehossee Farms (1998), Airy Hall Plantation (1998), Slann Island Plantation (1998), Tilt Tract (1998), McCollum Tract (1998), Chapel Hill LLC (1999), Prospect Hill LLC (1999), Old Dominion LLC (1999), Rose Hill (1999), Charleston County PRC (2000), William Seabrook Platation (2000), Creek House (2000), St. Margaret's Island (2000), Laurel Hill (2000), Temple of Sport (2000), My Place (2000)	
<b>Deed Restrictions</b>	<b>33</b>
Hannah Tract (1993)	
<b>Organization Ownership</b>	<b>10,519</b>
Nemours Plantation Wildlife Foundation (1995), Bailey Island (1997)	
<b>Management Agreements</b>	<b>18,808</b>
Westvaco (1991)	
<b>Other</b>	<b>5,892</b>
Botany Bay Plantation, Slann Island (1996)	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>89,114</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136,752</b>



### S.C. Department of Natural Resources

Dr. Paul A. Sandifer, Executive Director  
John E. Frampton, ACE Basin Task Force

### ACE Basin Committee

Mike McKenzie, Committee Chairman  
Dean Harrigal, Project Coordinator, Wildlife Management

David Allen - Freshwater Fisheries Section  
Michelle Crosby - Land Resources  
Sally Murphy - Wildlife Diversity Section

### Graphic Design

Karen Swanson - Marine Resources Division

### Editors

Dean Harrigal and Pete Laurie

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### ACE Basin Current Events

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
585 Donnelley Drive  
Green Pond, S.C. 29446



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