



South Carolina Wildlife Federation

WOODS & WATERS

FALL 2017

Inside: See how your support has aided in restoring & conserving South Carolina's wildlife and wildlife habitat.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation is to conserve and restore South Carolina's wildlife and wildlife habitat through education and advocacy. SCWF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit citizens' conservation organization governed by an elected board of directors. Although affiliated with The National Wildlife Federation, SCWF receives its support directly through its donors. Funds raised are used only in South Carolina.



South Carolina Wildlife Federation



Day's End – by Terri Bowman

STAFF

Ben Gregg

Executive Director

Sara Green

Director of Education

Laura Blake-Orr

Wildlife Habitat Manager

Kristin Weaver

Development and Events Manager

Trip King

Government Relations Manager

Steve Gilbert

Wildlife Biologist

Jenna Stephens

Public Lands Coordinator

South Carolina Wildlife Federation

215 Pickens Street

Columbia, SC 29205

(803) 256-0670 www.SCWF.org



Ready for Takeoff – by Stephanie DeRyke

ON THE COVER: Table Rock Reflections – by Amanda Johnson

Federation board works hard to be positive, keep open mind

I was recently asked during a friendly conversation if I watch much TV news. I admitted that I didn't because I'm tired of all the negativity. Being a pretty positive guy, I learned early on to try and keep an open mind.



Jason Burbage

But it seems that society today thrives on conflict. Whether you consume news from the television, social media or print, negativity and one-sidedness surrounds us. It's too easy today to pick a side and wage all-out war against whomever disagrees with you. Unfortunately for those who fall into this trap, there appears to be no middle ground. Unbending, narrow-minded dissention permeates our lives. It thrives in our politics, schools, businesses, religions, sports and you name it. And it is all so fruitless and unnecessary.

As a father of three young boys, I'm concerned about how our youth are being raised amongst all this craziness. So I strive to set a good example for them by embracing diversity, understanding

both sides of a disagreement and seeking sensible compromise. Which is why I'm honored to serve as chairman of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation. The SCWF embodies these very things. Our board is comprised of leaders from all types of backgrounds who offer tremendous insight from perspectives most folks wouldn't consider. This gives us an invaluable advantage when it comes to protecting South Carolina's wildlife and wildlife habitat through education and advocacy.

There are times when we disagree. But you can be sure that when the SCWF invests in educational programs or takes on an issue, it is with the incomparable power of our diverse board and you, our supporters. So let's continue to focus on what's important and not get sucked into a dark hole of biased conflict. Let's come together and continue to ensure that our great state remains great by understanding and protecting our wild outdoors. Your continued support allows us to do so, and we are extremely grateful that you care!



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Keys to S.C. Wildlife Federation success: courage, conviction, strength in numbers

BY JOHN M. BURBAGE

He's dead and mostly forgotten now, the witty gentleman with a wild bird's name who wrote history books for children. But the wisdom he shared about appreciating what we have in this world lives on.

Hendrik Willem van Loon was a World War I newspaper correspondent, college professor, artist and musician who authored more than 50 books on history, geography, myths and music, many of them illustrated with his own pen-and-ink drawings. Among his best work is *"The Story of Mankind,"* a unique view of the world for young people that continues to be updated by historians 68 years after his death.

In 1939, as the world returned to war, van Loon was one of 38 luminaries whose essays were published by Simon and Schuster in a collection titled *"I Believe: The personal philosophies of certain eminent men and women of our time."* He wrote he was most influenced by a fanciful assemblage of geniuses he called the Companionship of Laughing Philosophers that included Socrates, Beethoven, Bach, Voltaire, Spinoza and Kant.

"At birth I was provided with a small quantity of cosmic energy the substance out of which our universe is made," he said, adding that bits of this celestial vigor also took the shape of plants while others disguised themselves as weeds, the most noxious being Hitler and Mussolini.

As anyone who has ever tended a garden (or fought a war) knows, to achieve anything very good requires persistent removal of that which is very bad. Since this is the way nature chooses to perform her miracles, van Loon noted, it's of no use to find fault with the arrangement but crucial to understand the process and take proper action.

"This utterly lovely planet, which generously bestows on us a temporary place of abode, is capable of so much beauty and joy that we could establish a paradise on earth if we only had the courage of our own convictions and seriously desired to do something about it," he wrote.

The courage of conviction and desire to act is precisely the challenge that founders of the venerable South Carolina Wildlife Federation accepted 86 years ago as a group of high-spirited hunters and fishermen with a profound appreciation of all things wild. In today's climate — literally and otherwise — the zeal to articulate with one voice their commitment to protection and enhancement of the Palmetto State's abundance of wildlife and marine resources is more important than ever.

A brief history

In 1931, during the Depression, South Carolina was short on cash but flush with wild quail, so to speak. No one with any sense of appreciation of nature's bounty wanted a replay of the trigger-happy lunacy that hunted out of existence hundreds of millions of migrating passenger pigeons passing through the South at the turn of the century. With the invention of refrigerated rail cars, the once-prolific game bird coveted by big-city chefs whose customers paid high prices for fashionable fare was exterminated. The birds were victims of fools' commerce and the fallacy that unfettered hunting did not matter.

Meanwhile, poorly regulated hunting in South Carolina was decimating white tail deer and eastern wild turkey populations as well as certain fishes to the point of suffering the same fate as the passenger pigeon.

Columbia newspaperman Harry Hampton — a self-described "swamp rat" — used his new "Woods and Waters" column to spark a grassroots movement to stop haphazard abuse of South Carolina's wildlife and marine resources, and establish a statewide hunting and fishing commission to oversee the effort. Heretofore, the Palmetto State's woods and waters were policed more like fabled Sherwood Forest than a God-given gift essential for public health and happiness. Untrained game wardens worked for county sheriffs and wealthy elites in a good-old-boy patronage system gone wild.

Hampton and game conservationist Zan Heyward first took to the Rotary circuit to organize like-minded wildlife advocates into politically active sportsmen's clubs. University of South Carolina English professor Havilah Babcock, a regular contributor to *Field and Stream* magazine, joined the effort, and clubs were quickly formed in Sumter, Columbia and Edgefield. Twenty-five more followed and the 2,000-member S.C. Game and Fish Association emerged. Soon after the war it was renamed the S.C. Wildlife Federation.

The fledgling Federation immediately called on the state to employ scientific principles in natural resources management, establish fishing and hunting seasons and catch limits, and sell hunting and fishing licenses to fund it. The Federation lobbied for laws protecting the natural environment and to encourage transformation of marginal lands into healthy habitat. In 1952 — 31 years after the initial "Woods and Waters" column — the Legislature authorized an independent board of directors of what is now called the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

The work goes on

Today the Federation speaks out for all South Carolinians who appreciate natural resources, and it works to conserve and restore the state's wildlife and wildlife habitat through a variety of educational and public awareness programs. The state organization is affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation, but is financially independent. It relies primarily on South Carolinians with a passion for the out-of-doors to fund operations.

The Federation has participated in numerous conservation and environmental controversies through the years but always with protection and appreciation of natural resources as a rallying call. The issues have been numerous and the results not always positive.

They have included an attempt to halt construction of the Russell Dam on the Savannah River; the re-diversion of water between the Cooper and Santee rivers, establishment of the 15,000-acres Congaree National Wildlife Refuge; passage of state tidelands and beachfront management laws, establishment of the ACE Basin and Waccamaw national wildlife refuges, regulation of hazardous wastes and protection of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker in South Carolina.

The Federation was also instrumental in blocking construction of a pulp mill on the Santee Lakes, an oil refinery at Georgetown, a German petrochemical plant on the Colleton River in Beaufort County, and, more recently, a proposed coal-powered electricity plant on the Pee Dee River. Current issues include a push to include permanent re-authorization of the State Conservation Bank, which provides funds for purchasing conservation easements that protect thousands of acres for wildlife and wildlife enjoyment at a bargain price.

Currently, the Federation also lobbies state legislators to oppose seismic testing for oil and natural gas deposits as well as drilling off the South Carolina coast; and revision of a state water-use law to significantly reduce volumes taken from state rivers, streams and aquifers for large agricultural and other operations.

And, considering the climate, there is much work to be done. Take a look at the following Post and Courier headlines in just one week in September this year:

"Wake-up call: Charleston on front line of battle with sea rise."

"Scum: A growing worldwide menace, harmful algae blooms spawn toxins as deadly as cyanide."

"State's private dams still pose flood risks."

"Administration wants renewed ocean drilling."

"'Weather' or not, U.S. coastal growth surges."

"Four local tornadoes in Irma's wake."

**"A few drops of science
will disinfect an entire
barrel full of ignorance ..."**

— H.W. van Loon

Obviously the weather is changing: Average temperatures and the oceans are rising, and Atlantic storms are bigger and more numerous. South Carolina's four distinct seasons are losing clarity while far off glaciers melt. And — for no good reason — the fact that the climate is changing somehow remains a matter of debate. The only things debatable are the causes and what specifically should be done to deal with it — starting right now.

"Having been with the Wildlife Federation for 10 years now, I have seen the ebb and flow of public opinion and like you, observed the increasingly polarized dialogue over controversial issues. Throughout though, there has been little or no disagreement over the love and respect South Carolinians have for wildlife and keeping wild places wild," said Ben Gregg, executive director of the organization. "This devotion to the wild is what motivated our founders, and this is what motivates our loyal supporters today. In light of increasingly serious threats, South Carolinians of all stripes must say loud and clear: 'Healthy and prospering wildlife populations mean healthy and prospering South Carolina citizens.'"

South Carolinians care about the degradation of their natural resources. Most want to know more about what they've been given so graciously and how to protect it. But their bountiful woods, waters and marshes; splendid rolling midlands; and magnificent mountains are continuously threatened. Their strength to safeguard, enhance and enjoy what belongs to all is in numbers, and as well as the means for everyone to speak out with one voice so that the powers-that-be can hear them and do what's right.

Support of the S.C. Wildlife Federation — whether it is a gift of \$5 or \$5,000 — is an excellent and enjoyable way to do so, and everyone is invited to take part. This annual issue of the Federation magazine — which is named in honor of Harry Hampton's original newspaper column — is loaded with information about what the estimated 12,000-member-strong organization is and what it offers. The Federation's executive director and staffers are very helpful and highly motivated, and say they look forward to hearing from you soon. A donation card is included in this issue as a way you can continue to participate in their fine effort.

John M. Burbage is a journalist, free-lance writer, editor, book publisher and farmer. He is the recipient of the S.C. Wildlife Federation's 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award. He lives in downtown Charleston and on his family farm in Hampton County.



Rainbow Falls in the Fall – by Amanda Johnson

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND: So is this water, this air and this wildlife!

By **BEN GREGG**, Executive Director

As parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, we all work to leave the next generation of our families in better financial shape than our own generation. What about assets that we all own as one big family in South Carolina and indeed across the nation? Just like our personal assets, we need to be mindful of our stewardship duties to leave our commonly held natural resources in better shape than we found them.

Personal financial wealth? Yes, some of us are blessed with inheritances, nest eggs and golden parachutes; some of us are not.

BUT we all have an equal share in the bounty of the outdoors: water, air, wildlife and public lands. And rules matter: Private citizens may hunt and fish through licenses; corporations may legally impinge on the purity of water and air through permits; and utilities may cross public lands with proper easements.

So, how do we assure that our children and grandchildren will inherit their bounty when it comes to the resources so many of us hold sacred and hold in common as a public trust?

First, we need to educate the public about what we all own. Private landowners cannot manage their holdings if they take



Ben Gregg

them for granted and allow abuses to occur. Citizens must appreciate what they own and speak up when they see abuses of natural resources. This is especially important when those abuses are allowed by agencies and legislators designated by the state to protect and manage public resources.

In the current political atmosphere, some of our elected and appointed officials act as if the public bounty is a feed trough, and the biggest and loudest blowhards are allowed to be first

in line. Only if enough of us say NO WAY will the tide turn back to responsible stewardship by state and federal officials.

That is why the South Carolina Wildlife Federation is revving up its engines to bring more citizens into the fold as active advocates for public lands, waters, air and wildlife. It's not just about the environment though — it's also about keeping our treasured landscapes safe, healthy and sustainable.

So, don't take our PUBLIC beaches, PUBLIC coastal marshes and PUBLIC estuaries for granted. You can join dozens of coastal communities, hundreds of businesses and thousands of citizens who will fight renewed efforts in Washington D.C. to open up the South Atlantic to seismic exploration and development of oil and gas. If you're not sure how, simply give us a call or drop us a line. Our contact information is easily found on page 2 of this magazine. And it will not cost you a thing.

Please also join us as we build a citizen army with our partner, the National Wildlife Federation, to oppose federal department heads that are intent on polluting our ocean and chopping up our federal refuges, forests and parks in the name of private resource exploitation.

Thousands of South Carolinians joined millions of other Americans this summer to express their strong opposition to shrinking boundaries and increasing resource exploitation for 27 Department of Interior holdings set aside by presidents of both parties since 1996. In an amazing show of support for public lands, almost three million citizens said NO to gutting these outstanding examples of American landscapes, wildlife havens and scenic splendor. That was 99 percent of all comments submitted! It was a strong rebuke to Secretary of Interior Zinke and quite a testimonial to the devotion Americans have for the out-of-doors and keeping public lands in public hands.

And finally on a related topic, the basic attitudes held by cur-



Morning Glow at Botany Bay – by Sandy Dimke



"... The South Carolina Wildlife Federation is revving up its engines to bring more citizens into the fold as active advocates for public lands, waters, air and wildlife."

rent leadership at both S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are overdue for change: Our air and water are not for sale. The public trust must be held inviolate when it comes to our health and safety and for the health and safety of the generations to follow.

OUR COASTAL HERITAGE UNDER ATTACK



U.S. NAVY

Aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Coastal waters, oil don't mix — Say 'No' to drilling

BY STEVE GILBERT, Wildlife Biologist

The new administration in Washington, D.C. has put the South Atlantic region on the chopping block for seismic exploration and eventual drilling for oil and natural gas. This idea is totally out of step for a coastline that is geared towards recreation/tourism and is not equipped in any way for heavy petrochemical development.

Offshore exploration and drilling could be disastrous for our coast. Our coastal economies are defined by tourism, outdoor pursuits and fisheries; all of which could be immeasurably harmed by the oil industry. Even without a massive spill, documented small and disastrous spills, ever-present leaks and pipeline and infrastructure construction are constant impacts when this industry comes to town – as is the industry's inevitable strong-arming of state and local governments. Even the exploratory phase using seismic testing is fraught with impacts. This is why tens of thousands of citizens, 130 east coast local governments, more than

1,200 elected officials — and an alliance representing over 41,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families — have called for no off-shore drilling or seismic testing in the Atlantic.

Most marine organisms are highly dependent on sound for feeding, navigation, communication and reproduction. Last year, 75 of the world's most experienced and esteemed marine scientists collectively signed a letter strongly opposing seismic testing off of South Carolina and our neighboring states, concluding the blasts are harmful to marine mammals, important recreational and commercial fisheries and invertebrates. Using powerful underwater air-gun blasts required for seismic testing is equivalent to igniting a stick of dynamite every 10-12 seconds. These sounds extend underwater for hundreds of miles from the blast. Permit applications indicate that multiple companies would be conducting such surveys off of our coast continuously for periods of up to a year. This amount of blasting is unprecedented and downright ominous. Research has shown that fish and marine mammals



Through the Weeds – by Megan Dawson

show both physical harm and behavioral-pattern alteration from seismic blasts. Recent research also shows it had devastating effects on zooplankton, a critical link in the marine food web and the primary food for the North Atlantic right whale. This could spell doom for the critically endangered right whale, which is down to only a few hundred individuals.

Even cursory research concludes that safety claims of the seismic-testing industry are hyper-inflated and patently false. There is no doubt that our marine resources will be seriously damaged by such exploration. Oil industry claims that offshore drilling has become safer since the Gulf BP debacle are a mirage. Their projected economic impacts are woefully out of date and ignore South Carolina's biggest economic engine — recreation and tourism. Significantly more jobs could be gained by development of renewable energy resources such as solar and wind power. The pursuit of additional fossil fuels at a time when there is a market glut of oil and gas is foolish. We need to be steering away from their use to reduce ruinous emissions.

The South Carolina Wildlife Federation has been an active player in an engaged partnership of conservationists in-state, regionally and nationally fighting the powerful forces pushing for offshore oil and gas exploration, and drilling. Last year our state won a major victory when the U.S. Department of Interior deleted most of the Atlantic coast from a five-year plan for oil and gas lease sales along with associated seismic-testing permits. Now, with the new administration, we again face the possibility of oil exploration along our generally pristine marshes and shores.

South Carolinians are speaking loud and clear about their opposition to oil and gas. The threat of renewed testing is not a partisan issue. We must continue to stand strong in opposition to even the possibility of offshore drilling. The integrity of our coastal ecosystems and economies depend on it.

For more information, contact Steve Gilbert at steveg@scwf.org.



Long Leaf Pine – by Steve Moore

Long Leaf Pine Program

Longleaf pines once covered over 90 million acres across the southeastern United States, reaching from Virginia to eastern Texas. This ecosystem had been in place for thousands of years, no doubt aided by the frequent forest fires set by Native Americans because longleaf pine is a fire-adapted species. Frequent fires kept out other less well-adapted plants and animals, prepared the ground to receive the longleaf pine seeds, and allowed these magnificent trees to dominate the coastal plain of the Southeast. The trees and the fires both supported a whole host of plants and animals that were adapted to regular, small intensity fires and could grow in the filtered shade of the longleaf. The result was an ecosystem that is one of the most ecologically diverse in the world and is home to some of the most rare and unique plants and animals on the continent.

Unfortunately, longleaf's utility as a source of turpentine, strong timber for ship building and housing construction as well as conversions to faster growing loblolly pine, agriculture and urban developments resulted in a rapid demise of this once dominant coastal plain ecosystem. Very little of the original virgin forest still exists, and it is estimated that no more than about 3.5 million acres of longleaf pine forest remain in the region, about four percent of the original acreage.

Thanks to over \$300,000 in grants awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Wildlife Program, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation is part of a multi-organization team working to help restore and manage longleaf pine ecosystems on lands centered around the Francis Marion National Forest, including parts of Charleston, Berkeley, Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. Our specific role is to help educate landowners and the public on the value of the longleaf ecosystem and provide landowner cost-share incentives and technical assistance for the restoration and proper management of longleaf.

The cost-share from grant funds pay for the planting of Longleaf Pine seedlings, the use of prescribed fire as an ecological improvement technique, construction of firebreaks, use of herbicides and mechanical removal of dense, undesirable plant communities, and other accepted sustainable forestry practices. Through our landowner education, cost share and technical assistance program, we will have aided in the enhancement or restoration of over 10,000 acres and educated well over 1,000 landowners or members of the public about the benefits of longleaf ecosystem and prescribed fire.

If you are interested in finding out more about efforts to increase the acreage of the longleaf pines check out the Longleaf Alliance website at: longleafalliance.org.

“Gardening for Wildlife” Continues to Grow

By **LAURA BLAKE-ORR, Wildlife Habitat Manager**

South Carolina Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat have been growing significantly in recent years thanks to support of our corporate and individual supporters, even more so since the SCWF board of directors approved hiring a new position to focus on expanding the number of certified wildlife habitats in the state.

My name is Laura Blake-Orr and I joined the SCWF team in 2016 as Wildlife Habitat Manager. I plan, coordinate, implement and oversee all habitat programs of the SCWF in schoolyards, backyards, community properties and what we call Wildlife and Industry Together (WAIT) habitats.

Our staff here at the SCWF believes strongly in teamwork, information sharing and partnership-building all with a business mindset. SCWF recently expanded the number of affiliations with other like-minded groups in the community because we know the value of collaborating with profit and non-profit organizations working toward the common good. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians through environmental awareness and protection, educating the next generation to become environmental stewards, and habitat protection and enhancement for our state's native fauna and flora.

For example, Richland 1 Heyward Technology Center students and teachers build birdhouses so SCWF can offer them to the public. What started out with a few dozen bluebird boxes has grown to hundreds for one of the state's most attractive bird species.

Also available now are bat houses as well as nesting boxes for brown-headed nuthatch, screech owl, kestrel and wood ducks. In return, the SCWF and the state Forestry Commission host field trips twice a year for children and adults to explore nature first-hand, an experience they wouldn't have without this mutually beneficial partnership.

Students also see the bird boxes installed at Harbison

State Forest's native plant demonstration garden.

Our Schoolyard Habitats® Program focuses specifically on the use of school grounds as learning sites for wildlife conservation and cross-curricular learning. Both the National Wildlife Federation and the SCWF recognize the on-going efforts of schools across the country through a certification process. Certified schools provide essential habitat for wildlife, as well as use these sites as teaching tools integrated into the curriculum. To date, the NWF has certified more than 1,000 schools nationwide, and 250 of them are in South Carolina.

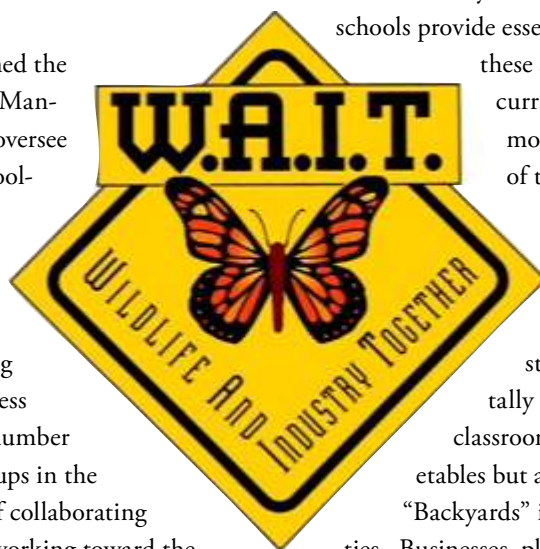
SCWF also helps schools through the S.C. Green Steps Program. This environmental education initiative encourages individual schools to take annual steps toward becoming more environmentally responsible, including using plants in the classroom and creating gardens not only for vegetables but also for wildlife.

“Backyards” include more than neighborhood properties. Businesses, places of worship, libraries, government offices, parks and other sites throughout the community have been certified as well. Certified Wildlife Habitats provide food, water, cover and places to raise young for wildlife, while incorporating sustainable gardening practices.

The National Wildlife Federation and SCWF have co-certified more than 7,000 Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitats in South Carolina, making S.C. a leader in the nation in the number of sites per capita. Our goal is to re-establish our state as No. 1 in the nation.

One effective way of accomplishing this goal is to partner with organizations such as The Garden Club of South Carolina, Inc., Keep the Midlands Beautiful, Columbia Green and others who desire to beautify the state and create productive landscapes for wildlife. Outreach is key to spreading the word about the value of creating and enhancing habitat in neighborhoods, conducting dozens of programs each year.

The NWF's Community



Troop 1126 planted milkweed for Monarch butterflies!

TINA VITA



Laura Blake-Orr, Wildlife Habitat Manager, promoting SCWF's Carolina Fence Garden at Andrew Jackson State Park.

Wildlife Habitat Program empowers citizen organizers to take action for wildlife in their own communities. The program provides leaders with a framework to restore wildlife habitat and educate and engage community members while working to attain NWF's esteemed certification as a wildlife-friendly community. South Carolina has four certified communities along with three that are registered or working towards certification. We continue to reach out to other environmentally sensitive neighborhoods, towns and cities to encourage them into engaging in the program.

With 31 years of environmental experience working in industry, I have a special interest in expanding the WAIT Program. WAIT is designed to encourage corporate landowners to integrate wildlife habitat needs into land-management decisions. As



Look What I've Got – by Laurie Walden

South Carolina becomes increasingly developed, there is less land available for wildlife. Businesses can offset habitat loss by devoting under-utilized lands to wildlife.

WAIT projects across the state include food plots for deer and turkey, meadows for ground-nesting birds, bluebird boxes on security fences, nature/fitness trails, solar installations, wetlands protection projects, riparian buffers, osprey nesting platforms, planting of native fruit trees, wood duck boxes, butterfly gardens and much more.

These industries are providing valuable wildlife habitat on their properties, are committed to environmental education for their employees and to partnering with groups in their communities. Currently 33 industrial sites are certified with several more in the works. Our plan is to add one new WAIT site per quarter with a long-term goal of significantly increasing the number over the next three years.

The SCWF staff and volunteers regularly meet with organizations to explain these programs. Help us to increase the number of certified sites by allowing us to share the benefits of improving wildlife habitat at your workplace, neighborhood association, garden club or other community group meeting.

Learn more about these programs or submit an application to have your property certified by visiting our website, www.scwf.org, or contact me at the office, (803) 256-0670 or laura@scwf.org.

W.A.I.T. Partners





Winging It – by Stephanie DeRyke

Reaching new audiences, diversifying membership

BY KRISTIN WEAVER, Development and Events Manager

I am excited to be the new manager of development and events for the South Carolina Wildlife Federation. I recently graduated from Columbia College of South Carolina, and am elated to have joined an organization that not only has a seasoned and passionate volunteer board and dedicated staff, but also the support of faithful donors and volunteers throughout the state.

One of our major goals for the upcoming year is to diversify our support through better communications and by letting people know how easy and important it is to become a part of the SCWF effort. One of my favorite things about the Federation is how people of so many different backgrounds and beliefs band together to support environmental conservation and advocacy. We will be working hard in the coming year to reach all South Carolinians who care about wildlife and the out-of-doors.

Today, our supporters number 12,000 people, almost all in South Carolina. About 1,200 of these supporters have blessed us

with gifts over the past year. Other supporters purchase our merchandise, attend our events and respond to action alerts on important issues. As membership coordinator, I am building up support from our current donors and prospective donors alike. Our work is critical for the continued well-being of South Carolina's amazing wildlife, and keeping the public informed about our work is so important. In fact, that's the key to attracting future generations of Palmetto State conservationists.

We are working hard to roll out new, exciting events across the state that will bring together a network of educated conservationists of different ages and backgrounds. Our annual Wild Summer's Night Auction and Wild Game Feast was a massive success this year, netting almost \$40,000 after expenses. Being my first auction, it was a huge learning experience in regards to fundraising and the role of events at SCWF. We plan to add a few smaller events to our calendar for 2018 around the state. We will use farmers markets, festivals and college campuses to set up informa-



RAY NELSON

ON-GOING PROGRAMS

- Palmetto Outdoor Academy
- Palmetto Pro Birder courses
- Midlands Master Naturalist Program
- Junior Naturalist Program
- Women's Outdoor Retreat
- Gardening for Wildlife
- Bird and bat boxes
- Schoolyard Habitats
- Carolina Fence Gardens
- Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitats
- S.C. Green Steps mentors
- Wildlife And Industry Together (WAIT) sites
- Community Wildlife Habitats
- Summer auction and wild game dinner
- College Scholarships
- Annual Photography Contest
- Longleaf Pine Habitat Restoration
- Milkweed for Monarchs Seed Distribution



RAY NELSON

2017 Auction and Wild Game Feast-SCWF raised over \$40,000 for its education and advocacy initiatives.

WHO WE ARE

MEMBERSHIP IS AT MORE THAN 12,000 OF THE FOLLOWING:

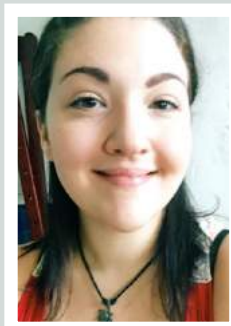
- Individual and business/corporate donors
- Participants in Federation sponsored wildlife education and habitat programs
- Event volunteers and participants
- Facebook and other friends
- Anyone who wants to be included in the Federation's email database or on its Postal Service mailing list

tion booths to increase membership. We are also planning special "mixers" so our members can meet face-to-face and work together to protect and enhance our wildlife heritage.

On top of that, we are working on new benefits for our members as a way to thank them for all that they do for us. We look forward to rolling out these changes in the coming year as a special thank you to our current and soon-to-be members.

We want South Carolinians of all ages and backgrounds to feel connected to SCWF. Funding, of course, is critical for our organization. But the only requirement to join us is to have a love of South Carolina, to care about the state's natural resources and to speak with one voice on issues vital to maintaining South Carolina's exceptional wildlife habitat from the seacoast to the mountains.

I would love your input about how we can be more effective as an organization for you. If you have any questions or suggestions about the Federation, please reach out to me kristin@scwf.org.



Kristin recently graduated from Columbia College, S.C., receiving her Bachelors of Arts in Media Writing and English Literary Studies. During her undergrad years, she had the opportunity to intern at Sustainable Midlands, a Columbia-based environmental non-profit organization, where she worked to fine-tune her communication and event planning skills.

Her passion for the environment and conservation make her feel right at home as a part of the SCWF team. In her free time, Kristin is an avid runner, participating in multiple races each month. She also enjoys hiking, writing fiction, cooking, and exploring South Carolina with her fiancé, Ian, and their rescue pups, Ellie and Frankie.

Education program expansion, importance of citizen science



Sara Green

By **SARA GREEN,**
Director Of Education

The South Carolina Wildlife Federation's Palmetto Outdoor Academy seeks to bring people closer to nature and train citizen scientists to aid in wildlife and habitat conservation. More than 1,000 people attend our education classes and events each year and are introduced to the wondrous flora and fauna of the Palmetto State, as well as the varied outdoor recreation opportunities that abound here.

One component of the Outdoor Academy is the very popular Midlands Master Naturalist program. The course consists of 12 sessions of classroom and fieldwork at natural places across the Midlands. Classes are taught by experts in the fields of natural history, botany, biology, forestry and geology. Students learn identification skills, ecological concepts and natural history of the plants, animals and ecosystems encountered.

Students see how this knowledge can be applied to manage for wildlife and to ensure that human impacts on Earth are sustainable. Certification is presented jointly from Clemson University and SCWF at the end of the course. We have considerable demand for this class, and registration fills quickly.

After graduation, Master Naturalists are required to complete 30 hours of volunteer service and advanced training. The Midlands Master Naturalist Association was formed by graduates to provide such opportunities. These well-trained volunteers have proven to be invaluable for SCWF, as well as other agencies and organizations. MMNA volunteers have participated in bird and mammal surveys, bird-banding at Fort Jackson, educational talks and park maintenance projects at Congaree National Park, Ses-

quicentennial State Park and the University of South Carolina's Belser Arboretum, to name just a few.

MMNA also partners with SCWF to offer the Junior Naturalist Program to teach kids about nature and the importance of conservation. We have held classes on Creek Critters, Birding for Kids, Nature Photography, Owls and Native Pollinators.

SCWF also holds several other educational opportunities open to the public that also count as advanced training hours for Master Naturalists from around the state. Naturalist Austin Jenkins has led classes that focused on Sandhills natural history, spiders and dragonflies. Dr. John Nelson led an Autumn Botany class.

Modeled after the Master Naturalist program, the Palmetto Pro Birder program focuses on bird identification and conservation.

We are building a core of SCWF citizen scientists who are equipped with field ornithology skills to be competent in identifying birds by sight, sound and behavior in the field. Our expert instructors lead several two-day modules each year, at different locations around the state. Each module holds a maximum of 20 people, and participants who complete four modules are certified as Pro Birders. To date, more than 200 people have been trained through this program, and 41 have been certified.

Another very popular component of the Academy is the Women's Outdoor Retreat (WOR). More than 200 ladies from around the Southeast attend this annual weekend retreat designed for women to experience nature and outdoor recreation with like-minded ladies in a non-competitive environment. Classes vary from archery and skeet shooting

to outdoor cooking and kayaking. Expert instructors volunteer their time and equipment to teach hands-on classes in the field. The Retreat is generally held in September at Hickory Knob State Park in McCormick and registration always fills in a matter of a few days.

More information about all of these programs can be found on our website at www.scwf.org or by contacting Sara Green at sara@scwf.org or (803) 609-4778.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for a lot of women who never go beyond their own surroundings to discover new things outdoors or learn to do new things."

— Janet Meyer

"SCWF's Master Naturalist and Pro Birder programs have opened my eyes to a wider and more beautiful world."

— Anne Palyok



"... everyone there was wonderful – caring, interested, genuinely nice people! I'm "hooked" – can't wait to do it again!"

— Marsha Green

PHOTOS BY SARA GREEN

Time to Protect Our Conservation Bank

By **TRIP KING, Government Relations Manager**

From its inception 86 years ago, protection of wildlife through advocacy and science-based policy has been a cornerstone of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation's mission. Today, that legacy continues as the Federation is on the frontlines as debate occurs on wildlife and conservation issues at the S.C. State House.

As government relations manager for SCWF the past two years, it has been my privilege to work with the staff, board and membership in developing and implementing a legislative strategy that reflects the mission and goals of the organization.

A key component of that strategy is our partnership with Audubon South Carolina to increase both organizations' footprints and outreach in the public policy arena. This partnership has proved to be extremely beneficial in enhancing our collective ability to advance a shared conservation agenda in the state General Assembly. SCWF is also a member of the broader Conservation Coalition made up of like-minded organizations that seek to preserve our state's natural heritage and to protect the lands, waters and wildlife habitats we cherish.

The renewal of legislation to renew the critical role of the state Conservation Bank will be at the top of our 2018 agenda. But before looking forward, let's briefly review action over the last two legislative sessions.

In 2016, SCWF championed a comprehensive deer management bill that is now law. Changes that were approved are largely science-based and should help sustain and enhance deer populations throughout South Carolina. In addition, SCWF along with a team of fellow-conservationists successfully opposed several efforts to erode the rights of South Carolinians to challenge permitting decisions before irreparable harm is done to our air, water and wildlife.

SCWF had many successes during the shorter 2017 session that finished in May. Along with Audubon South Carolina, we authored and secured passage of a House-Senate joint resolution that designates the third week in October as South Carolina Native Plant Week. This annual celebration calls attention to the loss of native habitat and encourages citizens to plant and nurture natural flora.

Additionally, we helped defeat an effort to prohibit local governments from enacting ordinances that would ban or restrict the use of plastic bags and other single-use containers in their communities. Had this bill passed, local governments would have been unable to regulate the use and disposal of these containers, which are increasingly causing harm to wildlife and their habitats, particularly marine life, and have become a primary source of unsightly litter in our communities.



Even though the General Assembly is out of session for the remainder of the year, our legislative work continues. SCWF has been a participant or observer at numerous legislative meetings and hearings this summer, including meetings of the House Offshore Oil Drilling Ad-Hoc Committee, which was formed recently to look into the issues surrounding gas and oil exploration and drilling off South Carolina's coast. We continue to meet regularly with other conservation organizations to further develop strategies and pool resources for the 2018 session.

Although there will be a dozen or so bills we will be working on in 2018, the Conservation Bank is at the top of our list for action. That is because if it the Bank is not re-authorized by June 30 of next year, it will cease to exist.

The Conservation Bank was created in 2004 by an act of the General Assembly to improve the quality of life in our state through protection of significant natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, archeological sites and urban parks. It has been invaluable in preserving 300,000 acres in South Carolina by partnering with state agencies, land trusts and other organizations. By providing funds for conservation easements and for outright purchases of outstanding properties, the natural and historical heritage for our children and grandchildren is more secure and promising.

But the Conservation Bank will go out of business on June 30, 2018, unless the General Assembly passes legislation to re-authorize continued operations. SCWF was part of the coalition that supported the bank's establishment at the turn of the century. Since it is the only program in the state that year in and year out provides for vital funding for land protection, we must do everything in our power to keep it in business. SCWF has joined forces with other conservation organizations in supporting an adequate annual funding level for the bank as well as its re-authorization through the years.

SCWF is already working closely with leaders in the General Assembly and with supporters of the Conservation Bank to pass a strong bill early in next year's session.

We can't overemphasize how important the Conservation Bank is to the overall protection of our special outdoor treasures. Once the Legislature convenes in January, we will keep you informed of progress and at critical times will ask you to contact your own legislators in support of the bank. Constituents' comments, especially if they are customized, can make a crucial difference.

While it is difficult to predict what may be on the legislative horizon in the coming year, we will continue to be pro-active in our advocacy for South Carolina's outdoor heritage. Nothing could be finer!

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First Place, A Milky Way Night by Lynn Long

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