



David Pearson

Notes From the President

Hello Friends

I am David Pearson and my passion for State Parks began at Hammocks Beach State Park with the creation of Friends of the Hammocks and Bear Island, Inc. a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. I grew up in Swansboro, NC near Hammocks Beach State Park and when I visited the park many years ago, I had no idea that I would become this involved in not only Hammocks Beach State Park, but the North Carolina State Park system. On my first visit to a state park I became concerned about the conditions of disrepair and lack of visitor amenities I felt one should expect at a State owned facility. As I began questioning Supt. Sam Bland about my concerns, he explained the need for a "friends group" at Hammocks Beach and we began a partnership that has lasted for decades.

I have been involved in many organizations, including FHBI, The Swansboro Rotary Club and several non-profit 501(c)3 charities over the years. As a Realtor, I have been active in our local board and at the state level. My passion for the environment and State Parks has led me to accept this position.

I have a vision for Friends of State Parks that I hope will complement and promote the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation as well as each individual State Park while keeping a focus on the environment and habitats.

One of my initial goals as President is to facilitate the organization of local Friends Groups at all State Parks. FSP is ideally positioned to do this as it has already obtained 501(c) 3 status from the IRS and local Friends Groups can operate individually under the charitable 501(c) 3 umbrella of FSP. Additionally, there are some well organized and very successful friends groups operating across the state already; and I want to encourage those that are passionate about their own parks to partner with FSP. FSP will benefit from such a partnership with these successful Friends groups because they have a lot of talented and passionate individuals who have much to share and give to a statewide organization. Another goal is to have an annual Friends of State Parks conference with keynote speakers and interpretive

plenary sessions on environmental education and resource management issues. I would like to invite other environmental groups, civic groups and community leaders to this conference so that we can get them involved with local Friends Groups and our state park system.

I personally have always been concerned about "my park". Issues of a state level or at another park did not seem that important. But as the years have gone by and FHBI has met many of its goals and objectives, I realized we can not further our park's goals without furthering the goals of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation. The reality of our situation is 40 other parks have the same issues. 40 other parks have the same needs. 40 other parks have the same problems! Yes, each park has its own unique place in the system, but all parks still share a lot of common concerns. There is only one way to address these concerns and that is at the state level.

I have come to believe if the Division is being taken care of, then "my park" will be taken care of. I also believe "We are all Stewards of our environment" and as a citizen of North Carolina Elk Knob is as much my environment as Hammocks Beach!

I look forward to meeting each of you soon!

Respectfully,
David M. Pearson
President, FSP



Sam Bland

by Martha Ahlquist



Sam Bland closed Hammocks Beach State Park literally thousands of times during his 22-year career as ranger and superintendent at the park. But when he shut the park gate on Feb. 27th that was the evening Bland shut the gate on his career with the N.C. Parks and Recreation Division, a career that began 30 years ago at Fort Macon State Park in Atlantic Beach.

Sam was born in Morehead City in 1958, but grew up in Aurora. He returned to the area while studying parks and conservation at East Caro-

lina University and became a seasonal employee at Fort Macon. His career began at the Atlantic Beach park as a ranger then as superintendent at the Eno River State Park. Following a brief stint as acting superintendent at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, he came to Hammocks Beach State Park in 1987 as superintendent. During his tenure as superintendent, the park acquired Huggins Island and he oversaw the building of the \$3.2 million visitor center on the mainland.

Sam asked to return to the position of ranger in 2004 to spend more time outdoors in the environment he loved. "Preserving the environment, to me, is more important than the physical improvements that were made to the park, and I am most proud of starting and maintaining resource management programs at the park." Those programs include sea turtle protection, wetland conservation and shore bird

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From the Other Coast ...

by Alec Whittaker

California's dusty, drought-ridden and financially strapped parks provide a striking contrast (except perhaps from the financial aspect) to the verdant parks of North Carolina. Low brush covering the hills provides for long scenic vistas but some signs along the way make for a tendency to keep eyes on the trail rather than admiring the view.

The snake making a leisurely crossing of the trail may or may not have been a rattler. We didn't choose to get close enough to examine him in detail and allowed plenty of time for him to get on his way before proceeding. Shed skins alongside the trail indicated some fairly large specimens

- and those were skins that had become too small for their inhabitants.

But hiking the coastal hills of southern California in July with temperatures in the low seventies and a morning breeze off the Pacific can compensate for a lot even if it means sharing the outdoors with companions who regard it as their home and us as the intruders.



Photo: Alec Whittaker

North Carolinians: the Salt, the Gems, of the Earth

by Alice Zawadzki

Coming down the mountain from the Friends of State Parks meeting at Grandfather Mountain and Elk Knob, I was profoundly overcome with the deep dedication and passion that drive the people, the North Carolinians by birth and choice, who care so much for the beauty and treasures of this magnificent State. Every turn I took, revealed yet another person who works for the Common Good.

With our now two-day gatherings, I hope that more people decide to join us at our beautiful State Parks as we learn about the latest happenings and enjoy the terrific walks that our Rangers and guides lead.

We were guests of the Morton family at Grandfather Mountain. Hugh's grandson, Crae Morton, welcomed and graciously hosted us for the day. The management of the Earth Biological Preserve is transitioning. The Morton Family is in the process of applying for 501(c)3 status for the scenic and educational complex that most people know as Grandfather. They recently added a "Green" Fudge Shop with skylights and other sensible energy saving inclusions. The backcountry and trails are our newest State Park.

District Superintendent Tom Jackson, who oversees the management of the 11 state parks west of I-77, welcomed us. At this time, there is no state staff on Grandfather. Superintendent of Elk Knob, Larry Trivette, includes Grandfather, Pineola Bog, Bear Pond bog, Yellow Mountain, and other nearby state park nature preserves under his direction and care.

Our new FSP president, David Pearson from Swansboro, presided over his first meeting. Dorothy Graham, John's wife, has joined the Board and is taking the Junior Ranger program that was dear to John, under her wing. We enjoyed a delicious lunch from the gracious folks from "Mildred's Grill". Naturalist Katie skillfully guided us the rest of the afternoon in the animal habitats and at the top of Grandfather.

Sunday we met at Elk Knob with Superintendent Larry Trivette and Ranger Kelly Safley. We were touched with the stories of the work done by the staff in developing the picnic area, office, and trail with limited state funds and the careful fostering of community involvement and volunteering in building the impressive gravel path bordered by people-moved stones on the way to the summit and

the community-directed fall festival. When Larry's Dad who lives in nearby Todd visited for the first time, Larry introduced to him, as he did to us, the importance of protecting Elk Knob's tiny streams, the headwaters of the New River. The uniqueness and durability of the Amphibolite rock atop Elk Knob make it an important preserve for globally endangered species such as Spreading avens and Heller's Blazing star, along with the unique walking fern that grows in the cracks in the Amphibolite boulders.

We closed our summer meeting with a wonderful lunch visit with Betty at Dave and Betty Martin's rustic chalet on nearby Snake Mountain.

(For an unabridged version of Alice's summer report, visit our FSP.org website.)

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protection "To me, parks have never been, and never will be, about people," he explains, "They are for the preservation and protection of species and habitats. That is why I wanted to be a ranger again."

As he looks toward retirement, he has no regrets. He has, he says, loved his job and career. "Everyone who comes into the park asks 'How can I get your job?' but it is time for me and time for the park. Hammocks Beach and Bear Island have been my park for 27 years."

In the words of Lewis Ledford, "When you look around the park, everything is better because he was there. He has really built a legacy for those who will follow him."

Friends of State Parks
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- Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina @ \$10.00 (\$8) + \$2 S+H = \$12.00 each
- Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas @ \$19.95 (\$15) + \$2.50 S+H = \$22.45 each
- North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide @ \$14.95 (\$12) + \$2 S&H = \$16.95 each
- Jawbone Trail Cookbook @ \$10 (\$7) + \$2.50 S&H = \$12.50 each

Note: FSP members prices in parenthesis

Name: _____ City & Zip _____
Address: _____

New from FSP

A series of regional tour guides to State Parks is in preparation and the first, now available through our website, focuses on the northwestern corner of the state and loops by famous mountain tops, one of the oldest rivers in the country, National Nature Landmarks, and the famous scenic vistas of the Blue Ridge. Plan your vacation and follow a route covering Grandfather Mountain State Park, Elk Knob State Park, Mount Jefferson State Natural Area, New River State Park, Stone Mountain State Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

FSP Quarterly Meeting

The next FSP quarterly meeting will be held at Merchants Millpond State Park on Saturday, October 24th. The meeting will commence at 10 am.