



AT THE TOP



American Oystercatcher
Haematopus palliatus

Uniquely marked by its black and white body and a long, thick orange beak, this shorebird is approximately 19 inches in length. Found on the Atlantic coast of North America, Oystercatchers nest on beaches and feed on marine invertebrates. The large, heavy beak is used to pry open bivalve molluscs.

Oystercatchers raise a clutch of two or three eggs. In winter, they are found in flocks from New Jersey to Florida. Although populations are low and declining, the species is not protected by the Endangered Species Act.



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DIFF Club Annual Meeting 2006

The DIFF Annual membership meeting was called to order by President Roger Wise at 11:00 AM. Helen Wynnberry returned thanks for the meal and asked God's blessing on all present. After the membership dined on the traditional fried fish, fries, hush-puppies and coleslaw, Roger welcomed fourteen new members to the Club. Roger stated the need for better and faster communication among DIFF members, as events seem to be happening rapidly, and requested members to provide up to date email addresses. Referring to the Blue Water Coalition lawsuit against the NPS, Roger assured that the DIFF Board was on top of the situation and encouraged all members to write or call their legislators expressing our concerns about the possibility of losing ORV access to the seashore.

Mark Weir reported on the tremendously successful Drum Tournament last fall. We had the largest number of participants and the most prizes in the history of this Tournament. Mark was especially

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Spring Tournament!

The DIFF Club would like to announce the upcoming, First Annual, Spring Surf Fishing Tournament. This tournament will begin at 10:00 AM on Friday, June 9, 2006 and will end at 2:00 PM on Saturday, June 10. The tournament format is somewhat different than the Fall Tournament. It will be open to teams of four members and will be based on measurements in inches and not pounds. Members that do not have a group of four will be assigned to a team. It can even be a catch and release tournament for folks who do not enjoy keeping, cleaning and eating their catch. It is all based on the honor system of the 4 team members.

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pleased that the winner of first place in the whitening category was nine year old Tate Wilkinson! He then listed by name the top ten money winners of last fall's Tournament.

New Board member Connie Grant described the inauguration of a Spring Surf Fishing Tournament to be held on Davis Island June 9th & 10th. This will consist of four-man teams in hopes that families would be encouraged to participate. There will be no pre-registration, no weigh-in and the purse will be determined as a percentage of the entrance fees collected. Winners will be determined by totaling points awarded based on the species of fish caught, their length and quantity...the honor system is to be used. See sign-up sheet inside newsletter for details.

Mark Weir showed a very detailed Power Point presentation



Mark Weir

giving the membership an overview of the entities involved in the "Blue Water Coalition lawsuit" against the National Park Service. The alarm was sounded by board member Robert (Gaterman) Wilson at the first of the year that something was going on which might jeopardize ORV access to the beach at CALO. The DIFF Board scrambled to gain information on the Environmentalist groups, sport-fisherman groups and the responses of the National Park Service. Mark compiled this information into a large story board so we could know who and what we were facing. The gauntlet was thrown by the Blue Water Coalition (subsidiary of Friends of the Earth) on November 29, 2005 when they sued the NPS to ban all ORV's in all National Parks until each Park implements, monitors and enforces their ORV special regulations. After Mark laid out the "players", he outlined the evolution of the legal process to present showing that the Blue Ribbon Coalition has filed a motion to intervene in the Blue Water law suit on January 6, 2006. The sport-fisherman groups United Four Wheel Drive Association (UFWDA) and Cape Hatteras Access Preservation Alliance (CHAPA) joined in with

another motion to intervene on January 16, 2006. At present, the situation is in the hands of the lawyers...no doubt a bonanza for them!

Mark described the NPS initiatives at CAHA and how they got into the negotiated regulation process which is under control of professional mediators. They are on step three of a sixteen step process, which is very time-consuming, as well as developing an endangered species plan. We have an entirely different situation at this time at CALO. The NPS has hastened to implement an Interim Threatened Species Plan running concurrently with an ORV Environmental Assessment. It is hoped by going through a public scoping process on these Plans we will avoid the extremely confrontational regulated negotiations which is going on at CAHA.

Roger Wise presented the DIFF Position Statement and Alternative Action Plans the Board had previously approved. He recommended we join forces with The Blue Ribbon Alliance and the United Mobile Sport-fishermen as they are already involved and best represent DIFF's interests in the lawsuits. Simply put, our desire is to maintain the status quo until the NPS at CALO hammers out the ORV regulations.

Off-Road Vehicle Position Statement **February 25, 2006**

The DIFF club members have extensive experience using Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) as beach access for surf fishing, bird watching, seashell collecting and other passive recreational activities. We have witnessed the beach dynamics resulting from hurricanes and other natural events over a long period. Based on our collective experience, we believe that responsible use of ORVs in accordance with the existing rules has not caused damage to the Cape Lookout National Seashore resources. Therefore, the DIFF club is opposed to the lawsuit filed by Blue Water et al v. the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service on November 29, 2005. Any consideration for limiting beach access to ORVs must be based on scientific evidence at Cape Lookout National

Seashore.

The DIFC club recognizes the Cape Lookout National Seashore as a unique resource with a rich heritage including continuous use of ORVs for surf fishing since the end of World War II. The seashore is not encumbered by rigid structures such as paved roads, power lines or private property near the shoreline. The rapid expansion of coastal residential development has significantly reduced the availability of beach access for surf fishing. The North and South Core Banks are the best remaining natural beaches for surf fishing on the East Coast. The Cape Lookout National Seashore should be managed to retain its existing natural characteristics and long-standing surf fishing heritage.

The DIFC club has not had a formal affiliation with any sportsman or environmental organization. The club has not engaged in legal actions. The club has worked collaboratively with the Cape Lookout National Seashore management and concessionaires to benefit our members and other users of South Core Banks. The DIFC club supports the continuation of status quo beach access by responsible ORV use at Cape Lookout National Seashore during the Interim Protected Species Management Plan / Environmental Assessment process and the development of ORV Special Regulations. The DIFC club seeks recognition as a user representative by the National Park Service in those processes.

CALO Superintendent Bob Vogel addressed the membership saying he is deeply involved in what is happening with the lawsuit. He believes that beach access at CALO is legally protected and defensible. He believes that ORV



Bob Vogel

access will continue and that he is happy about where we and CALO are in the legal process. Bob recommends we stay informed and not panic... "the sky is NOT falling", he said. Bob has been briefing the Director of the Department of the Interior in

Washington, DC who understands what is going on with the lawsuit.

Bob Vogel announced improvements at the lighthouse of new restrooms, a visitor orientation center and a public health approved water supply. Dredging is underway for a new shoreline. There will be a greater presence of staff on the island in order to make the Interim Plan work. New regulations including helmet requirements for ATV riders will be enforced, he said. Bob will return from his temporary assignment on or about April 22nd. Both he and we will be glad of his homecoming!

Treasurer B K Barringer reported the Club has a balance of \$32,453.44.

Work Week dates to be announced after coordinating with Mike McGee and Tom Monaco.

Roger Wise praised and thanked the members for their service who are rotating off the Board: Jack Davis, Jim Gaither, Charles Wright and Helen Wynnberry. A slate of proposed Board Members for 2006 was presented to the membership. Elected by acclamation are previous Board members: B K Barringer, Tim Doss, Richard Frank, Mike Laughlin, Mark Weir, Adam White, Robert Wilson and Roger Wise. New Board members elected are: Ed Caskey, Connie Grant and Vickie King.

Mark Childress of Cape Lookout Concessions thanked the DIFC members for their cooperation in the change in concessionaire. He said there will be more caretakers rotating through and that Kari and Annette will be sharing duties making cabin and ferry reservations.



Mark Childress

The ferries have all been overhauled in dry-dock this winter and cabin #26 will be replaced.

Childress said that his recent visit with U.S. congressmen and senators on Capitol Hill went very well...He believes them to be sport-fishermen's allies in the ORV lawsuit issue.

On that encouraging note, the meeting was adjourned.

Mike Laughlin, Sec'y

President's Letter

Much discussion occurred about what should be included in the President's Letter for this issue. It was thought that the Blue Water lawsuit against the Park Service was the primary interest of our members and Board; however, in answering the suit, the Park Service has challenged Blue Water's standing and right to bring a suit of this magnitude. As often occurs when dealing with lawsuits and our government, it appears that only lawyers will benefit in this situation and the public will be left in limbo. I remind you that it is imperative that you continue to write your elected officials with your view of this lawsuit. Even though this suit is to be determined on existing laws, our elected officials need to get excited about the necessary changes in the statutes which would be more to the benefit of users of our natural resources and environment.

Rest assured the Board of Directors is closely watching events that could impact your access to the beach on Davis Island. If you attended the Annual Meeting, you know that we are joining two national groups to assist in the legal defense of ORV issues. These groups are the Blue Ribbon Coalition and the United Mobile Sports-fishermen...both have websites you can check to see they have similar interests and goals as ours.

BUT...to me a more important topic is the Interim Protected Species Environmental Assessment and Management Plan just made public by the Park Service March 10, 2006. This 300-plus page document has the potential to make immediate and lasting impact on our ability to access the island as we have traditionally done. If you recall, the Park Service held a series of public meetings to provide input for development of this plan. I as well as other DIFF members attended and presented a written statement to the Park Service indicating our Club's position. This position was simply put...we like the status quo. That is, we like the way the island is being managed now. Of the three alternative plans proposed by the Park Service in November 2005, Alternative A seemed to more closely agree with the status quo.

The Park service has now added a fourth Alternative, D. Since this document is so extensive and detailed, it will take a considerable amount of time

to digest all the material it contains. At this point, I am not sure why a fourth alternative is necessary. Additionally, I am not sure that the Alternatives A, B or C provided in the first draft are the same alternatives presented to us at the public scoping meetings in November. What I am sure of is that the public has until April 7, 2006 to provide comments and that this is insufficient time for us to study this huge document.

A cursory review of this document leads me to believe that if the four alternatives are our only choices, Alternative A should get our vote. However, what is equally important is that we, the users of the island and part of the "truly interested public" have more time to study and understand this document.

Politicians and government agencies respond well to public comment. It is our duty to proclaim loudly our wishes to those in charge of policy formulation and legislative change. Moreover, it is our duty to write or email the Park Service to request an extension of the public comment period well beyond April 7th. We need more time to dissect the Interim Species Management Plan. I urge all members to do this soon!



Roger Wise

The DIFF Club needs to be able to communicate fast-breaking information rapidly with its membership. Please send your email addresses to bk@diffclub.com. We will use these addresses only to alert you periodically of issues members need to be aware of.

Please act today regarding these issues! Get your friends to join DIFF! Numbers speak loudly and we need all the members possible!

Roger Wise
President

Registration for this tournament is limited to the day of the event at the tournament headquarters on the island. There will be no pre-registration for this event, making it extremely easy to plan for and attend, even at the spur of the moment! Entry fee is only \$10.00 (plus \$20.00 membership if you are not already a DIFF Member). Our intent is to draw families, young people, teachers, vacationers, and those that generally have some summertime off. Of course, we welcome all who want to enjoy the island this time of the year. This would be an excellent opportunity to invite a work colleague, take a kid, or plan a family event.



Connie Grant

Anyone needing more information about this event should contact, Con Grant at 803-329-1265. We could also use some help with the logistics once we get to the island. If you are willing to help, please contact Con at the same number. The competition should be strong but the winning results will be great fellowship with some of the best folks and best surf fishing on the east coast.

Connie Grant

Long Range Planning

The DIFF Board of Directors approved the first Long Range Plan in July. The LRP committee consisting of Jack Davis, Tim Doss, Mike Laughlin, Mark Weir and Roger Wise worked diligently for five months to complete the plan. The LRP establishes an on-going process to assure the future success of DIFF through 2009. The committee will update the plan every year. The five-year plan describes many DIFF activities that collectively will increase the organization's value to its members and to others interested in South Core Banks.

The preservation and continuation of the rich surf-fishing heritage is a vital interest to DIFF.

Surf fisherman on South Core Banks need a voice to represent them. DIFF has the head-count, professional leadership and credibility to effectively represent the surf fishing interests. In addition the club is capable of providing multiple services to its membership and to other users of South Core Banks. The key actions include Membership Growth, Fiscal Policy, Newsletter, Web Site, Annual Members Meeting, Tournaments, Work Trips, Fishing-with-a-Ranger, Board of Directors, Off-Road Vehicle Plan, Affiliation with Other Organizations and Other Future Initiatives.

Mike Laughlin originated the new slogan "DIFF Makes A DIFFerence" during a LRP committee meeting in March. "DIFF Makes A DIFFerence" is a bold statement that the DIFF club will make a positive difference for club members and others interested in the South Core Banks Island over the next five years and beyond.

A copy of the LRP will be available for viewing by interested members at the Annual Members meeting In Pineville in March and at the Tournament in September. Contact any of the Board of Directors to get your ideas included in the next LRP update.

Buoy Tree Man Passes

David Yeomans, 84, life long resident of Cape Lookout and Harkers Island died on March 1, 2006. Best known by cape visitors for his friendly manner, story telling and singing of "The Booze Yacht", he had many friends and gave special meaning to the history of Cape Lookout. Excerpts from Brad Rich's article in the Carteret News-Times said it well. "Like the gnarled and almost surreal live oak trees that dot his beloved Harkers Island, David Yeomans until his death this morning seemed both a part of nature and apart from it, both an immutable force strong enough to withstand a hurricane's fury and tender enough to bow gracefully in a gentle sou'westerly breeze". Mr. Yeomans was also the postmaster and unofficial "mayor" of a closely-knit Down East community of legendary fishermen, seafarers and characters. We are fortunate he came our way.

B K Barringer

Is the Surf Fisherman An Endangered Species?

The US Fish and Wildlife will never add the Surf Fisherman to their endangered species listing, nor will the North Carolina Wildlife Commission. So what is a Surf Fisherman and why could he become extinct?

There are three types of saltwater recreational fisherman: Boat Fisherman, Pier Fisherman and Surf Fisherman. The Boat Fisherman gains an advantage by entering the fish's native territory. They employ high-speed boats with high technology electronics to find fish. Some Boat Fishermen use a motorized fishing reel to retrieve fish from deep water. The Pier Fisherman gains an advantage by standing on an elevated structure that extends into the ocean or inlet. Structures include purpose-built fishing piers and highway bridges with suitable pedestrian areas. The structure allows the Pier Fisherman to fish in deeper water and facilitates a longer casting distance. The Pier also affords a superior view of the beach contours and nearby fish populations.

The Surf Fisherman (or Surf Fisherwoman)



Gordon Jones

stands on his or her native territory and casts into the fish's native territory using a simple rod and reel. Surf fishing is the purest form of salt-water sport fishing. It requires a broad set of skills. The Surf Fisherman must identify the best fishing locations and tide conditions by viewing the water from the shore level vantage point. The Surf fisherman must determine the appropriate casting distance and acrobatically

execute the cast standing in soft sand, while being pounded by heavy surf and facing strong winds. The Surf Fisherman must select terminal tackle and bait based on knowledge of the indigenous fish species, their seasonal patterns and prior experience. The Surf Fisherman is not necessarily anti-social, but they prefer rela-



Linda Laughlin

tively sparsely populated shorelines to avoid the elbow-to-elbow conditions often found on piers and boats. The Surf Fisherman must have an array of rods, reels, tackle, bait, coolers, clothing and nourishment for a day's fishing. It becomes impractical to hand carry all this equipment in the soft sand. A motorized vehicle such 4x4 SUV, 4x4 truck, ATV, RV or other vehicles with special tires for driving on soft sand is required. The Surf Fisherman does not drive recklessly or at high speed on the sand. The Surf Fisherman is not a thrill seeker. The Surf Fisherman does not endanger other park visitors or native wildlife. The Surf Fisherman simply drives a vehicle along the shoreline to accomplish the mission of surf fishing.

The Surf Fisherman faces many challenges. Wind velocity and wind direction are major influences on fishing success. A strong Northeast wind can make much of the beach un-fishable due to strong riptides. The Surf Fisherman will seek sheltered waters created by sandbars, holes or natural cuts in the beach shoreline. Conditions may be so severe that the Surf Fisherman will move to protected waters such as Drum Inlet, Cape Lookout Point, the Rock Jetty or the Spit area. Large masses of sea grass sometimes move into the surf area driven by ocean currents and South winds. Sea

grass discourages fish from biting and it clings to fishing line. The Surf Fisherman avoids the sea grass by moving South or North by five to ten miles. The next day these challenging conditions may reverse, requiring the Surf Fisherman to go to a different shore area. Some species congregate in schools. The successful Surf Fisherman may have to drive to either end of the island to locate the targeted species.

The reason the Surf Fisherman could become extent is loss of habitat. Miles and miles of North Carolina's prime surf fishing shoreline have become inaccessible to surf fishing in my lifetime. Towns along Bogue Banks in Carteret County have severely restricted beach vehicles by requiring costly permits and closing access ramps. Snobby private homeowners claim the surf as their private property, even though North Carolina law recognizes all beaches as public. Dare County beaches have changed in a similar manner. Cape Hatteras National Seashore has closed beaches while experiencing a rise in Surf Fisherman population, thus increasing user density. Cape Lookout National Seashore is the best remaining shoreline in North Carolina for surf fishing. It has vast saltwater marshes and clean water that fosters all forms of sea life including many highly prized fish species. It has a good variety of prime fishing areas including several



inlets, East-facing shoreline, South-facing shoreline, Cape Lookout Point and the Spit. It is unique in the absence of private homes near the shoreline. It is unique in having long stretches of shoreline for responsible ORV vehicle access. This habitat is critical for the survival of the Surf Fisherman.

The management of this prime surf fishing habitat is entrusted to the National Park Service Cape Lookout National Seashore to ensure that the rich Surf Fisherman Heritage survives and thrives on North and South Core Banks for current and future generations.

Mark Weir

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Of your own beach buggy.
Contact J W Smith at
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(Proceeds go to DIFF Club)



Collect a memory!

DIFF Club News

Davis Island Fishing Foundation
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Davis Island Fishing Foundation

P .O. Box 268
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DIFF makes a DIFFerence!

The Davis Island Fishing Foundation is a non-profit group dedicated to preserving the cultural, historic and natural heritage of Davis Island in Carteret County, NC.

The DIFF CLUB helps maintain the cabins at the Great Island camp and is involved in projects designed to protect the fish and wildlife population in the portion of Cape Lookout Seashore known as Core Banks South.

Club members can fish in annual spring and fall fishing tournaments sponsored by the Club.

If you are interested in joining DIFF, see the membership form inside.

This newsletter is published quarterly and edited by Mike Laughlin. 803 328 8915.

