

Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club

<http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/>

P.O. Box 1303, Chapel Hill, NC 27514



News from our conservation committee:

Jordan Lake: wildlife and nutrients

On March 12, a joint meeting of the Carolina Meadows Bird Watchers and Sierra Club focused on Jordan Lake. The evening began with a description of the state's response to the excess nutrients in the lake. The Environmental Management Commission is writing new rules for those occupying the watershed and will release a draft for public comment before the rules are finalized and implemented. The Sierra Club plans to comment when the rules are released. This evening was part of an attempt to learn more about the lake to prepare for that process.

The first of two speakers was Dr. Norman Budnitz of Duke University, who presented "The Birds of Jordan Lake." With thirty years of experience with bird counts and surveys, he put the variations of individual species into the historical perspective of the creation of the lake. The species that have benefited include ring-billed gulls, Canada geese, double-crested cormorants, great blue herons, osprey, and bald eagles. The charts of their populations all show a rise until 2003. Causes for slight declines since then aren't clear. But these birds flourish at the new lake.

Other populations declined as the lake changed their habitats. For example, there are fewer barn swallows where the lake swallowed farmlands and attendant barns, and fewer field sparrows and meadowlarks where fields and meadows were submerged.

Then Catherine Deininger, Stream Steward Coordinator for the Haw River Assembly, discussed the problems excess nutrients create for the ecosystem, including the creatures in and around the lake. The easiest measure of the nutrients in the lake is chlorophyll-a, which indicates how much algae is present. Although chlorophyll-a is necessary because it allows plants to use sunlight to make carbohydrates out of carbon dioxide, too much can cause problems by depleting the oxygen dissolved in the water. All creatures can be affected, from the small amphibians, crustaceans, and insect larvae to the fish that eat them and the birds that eat both macro-invertebrates and fish. Eventually, the water could harbor toxic algae.

Toxic algae haven't appeared in Jordan Lake yet, or the large fish die-offs that can follow. But the lake has seen pH levels exceeding state standards, which also puts stress on aquatic life.

Dr. Budnitz said that the excess nutrients in the water cannot currently explain the variations he has seen in bird populations. Ms. Deininger said that in water with excess nutrients, some aquatic species might, in fact, thrive. The problem is that the diversity of species in the lake could drop and the whole system be thrown off balance so that the lake could not fulfill its many roles in Piedmont life. This is what we hope the new rules will prevent. Look for information sometime in the fall about how you can participate in the public discussion about the EMC's plan to protect the lake.

— Report by Judith Ferster

Orange-Chatham Group Leaders

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* = Executive Committee Member (term expires in 2007)

+ = Executive Committee Member (term expires in 2006)



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OCG Events:

May 10th — Group Meeting
 7:30 p.m., Chapel Hill Public Library
 Note change in venue

This month's meeting is a panel discussion about the Environmental Management Commission's efforts to write new rules for Jordan Lake. Panel members include:

Elaine Chiosso, Executive Director of the Haw River Assembly, will talk about the shape of the lake and the shape it's in—the factors that make it vulnerable to nutrient pollution. Joe Rudek, a scientist with Environmental Defense, will talk about some engineering strategies, especially for storm water, that can help prevent degradation of water quality. Amy Pickle, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, will discuss how new rules could be implemented and what they could accomplish.

June 17th (Sat.) — Summer Picnic
 5-8 p.m., Umstead Park, Chapel Hill

Join us for our annual summer picnic. Meet old and new friends and discuss new ideas. Please bring a picnic fare dish to share with others. Drinks provided.

Please note that, due to summer vacation, there will be **no group meeting in July**.

Conservation Committee meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month. All members are invited to join us in discussing various projects. Contact Judith Ferster for location.

Executive Committee Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, open to all group members: May 2nd, 7:00 p.m., 521 Greensboro Street (at the intersection with Merritt Mill Road). Use back entrance. June 6th, 7:00 p.m., Carolina Meadows, Club Annex 2nd floor meeting room.

NC Legislature Lobby Day: June 7, 2006

On Wednesday, June 7th, members from the entire North Carolina Sierra Club Chapter will gather in Raleigh to encourage their legislators to support environmental legislation backed by the Sierra Club. The Chapter will provide appointments with your legislators, training, background on the issues, and salient points to raise. We ask you to provide a passionate voice for the environment and help put a face on the most pressing environmental issues facing our State. Time: 9a.m.-2p.m. Lunch will be available. Advance registration is preferred. Even if your representatives are likely to support environmental bills, they always appreciate their constituents' support. For more information please visit our website at <http://nc.sierraclub.org/highlights/LobbyDay.html> or contact Hartley Bream at conservation-cg@sierraclub-nc.org or 919-302-7032.

Political Endorsements

Upon recommendation of the OCG Political and Executive Committees, the North Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club has endorsed the following candidates for elected office:

Orange County Commissioner: Alice Gordon, Barry Jacobs, and Mike Nelson. The Sierra Club also lends support to Fred Black.

Chatham County Commissioner: George Lucier, Carl Thompson, and Ted Vanderbeck

NC Senate 23: Eleanir Kinnaird

NC Senate 18: Bob Atwater

NC House 54: Joe Hackney

NC House 56: Verla Insko

NC House 63: Alice Borsden



Outings

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/>, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version.

Ongoing Service Outing:

3rd Saturdays on the Bolin Creek Trail: This is a long-term habitat restoration project, and we need many more volunteers. It's hard work, but very rewarding. We meet at the Greenway entrance on Bolinwood Drive, just off Hillsborough Street in Chapel Hill. Please contact Bill Bracey at arbor-net@mindspring.com, or 942-9937.

Current Outings:

SATURDAY A.M. HIKES: May 6, 13, 20, 27 William B. Umstead State Park, Sycamore Trail. Moderate 7.2 mile hike at a steady pace. We will meet at the Crabtree Creek section off US 70 at 10 a.m. From the entrance, drive past the visitor center and proceed to the second parking lot. Please wear hiking boots and carry water; a picnic lunch is optional. Pre-registration is not required. In case of inclement weather or questions, contact Debbie Jacobowitz (HWG) at (919) 493-0780. For directions, see <http://ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/wium/directions.html> or call (919) 571-4170.

SUNDAY A.M. HIKES: May 7, 14, 21, 28 William B. Umstead State Park day hike. Moderate 5.9 mile hike at a steady pace. We will meet at the Reedy Creek section off I-40 (exit 287, turn left on Harrison into the parking lot) at 10 a.m. Please wear sturdy footwear and carry at least 16 oz. water; a picnic lunch is optional. Pre-registration is not required. In case of inclement weather or questions, contact Debbie Jacobowitz (HWG) at (919) 493-0780.

MAY 6 (Sat) Join us along with host Frank Newell for a tour of a Warren county wildlife rehabilitation center featuring a wolf, a mountain lion, bobcats and more. We will also visit the Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group, a volunteer organization that makes approximately 1,000 bluebird houses per month. Afterwards we will take a moderate 5-mile hike on the farm of Sears Bugg, with the promise of colonies of blooming Lady's Slippers. Pack a lunch for this all day, 9-5 educational event. Meet in north Raleigh around 9 a.m. for a carpool/caravan to Warrenton. Limited to 15. Contact Jeanette Stanley (CG) at jeanette.stanley@ncmail.net or (919) 847-2676, Mon. or Wed. 6-9 p.m.

MAY 6 (Sat) 10 a.m. moderate 6.5-mile hike around Crabtree Lake. Minimal elevation change. Hiking boots and water required. Limited to 15. Contact Janet Hitti (HWG) at 919-572-2407 or janet.hitti@verizon.net.

MAY 12-14 Mt. Rogers Backpack (moderate to strenuous) - Enjoy 3 days of backpacking in the rugged and scenic Mt. Rogers

area of Virginia, which boasts the highest elevation in VA (5729') and is the only place in VA that preserves evidence of ancient glaciation. Flora and fauna include hawks, falcons, songbirds, deer, flame azalea, rhododendron, mountain laurel, Fraser Fir and Red Spruce. We may even see the wild Virginia Highlands horses that graze on the balds. Total mileage approximately 15 miles. Limited to 6. Contact Christian Stalberg at cstalberg@ecoaccess.org or 919-801-0734.

MAY 13 (Sat) Easy 1.5-mile, kid-friendly hike at Eno River State Park. We'll take a leisurely stroll near the Eno River, crossing over a footbridge that's sure to be a hit. We'll take several breaks to turn over rocks and munch snacks, so be sure to bring a snack. Children must be accompanied by a parent. Please leave pets at home. Contact Matt Brown (OCG) at 919-732-0855 before 9:00 p.m. or e-mail matt.brown@mail.com.

MAY 14 (Sun) NC Museum of Art day hike. Come on an easy walk along the House Creek Greenway Trail up to and across NC's longest pedestrian bridge. The bridge crosses I-440 leading to Meredith College. There are several works of art and educational stations along the paved trail. On our return from Meredith we will take a portion of the unpaved Woodland Trail and spend some time in the Cloud Chamber. 12 person limit. Water, sunscreen and insect repellent will be needed. Happy Mothers Day! Contact Mike DiAngelo at (919) 567-9276.

MAY 20 (Sat) Very leisurely morning walk to view historic sites and exhibits in Hillsborough. After the hike, participants will have the option of visiting beautiful Montrose Gardens, which are open only two days a year. Contact Annette Jurgelski (OCG) at 919-644-0280 or e-mail her at jurge001@mc.duke.edu.

MAY 21 (Sun) Enjoy Spring in Duke Forest. Much of the hiking will be along the New Hope Creek. Easy to moderate. Call Margaret Anderson (HWG) at 919-493-0397 before 9:00 p.m. or send an e-mail to andcamlib@hotmail.com.

MAY 21 (Sun) Raven Rock State Park day hike. Easy-moderate 5.2 mile hike on Campbell Creek Loop, including a side trip to Lanier Falls. Optional 1.2 mile extension to the Fish Trap area. Relatively flat trails, views of the Cape Fear River and nice hardwoods make for a scenic walk. Space is limited. To sign up, contact Sarah Slover (CG) at 919-362-8632 or sloversj@hotmail.com.

MAY 26-29 Memorial Day weekend backpack in the Middle Prong Wilderness. This is a rugged, solitary area that is nevertheless worth the extra effort. This trip will be a circuit backpack starting with a 3,100' elevation gain in just 3.4 miles to the only overlook towards the west flank of Shining Rock Wilderness. Then, the terrain becomes easier until it plunges down Middle Prong Creek Trail which has several testy stream crossings. Later we will take several interesting day hikes. Strenuous; limited to six. Contact Chris David (CG) at (919) 676-8927 or chrisdavid@bellsouth.net

**For more outings throughout the summer, see
our website:
<http://nc.sierraclub.org/ocg/>**



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