
NEMOURS GAZETTE

A publication of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, South Carolina 29945 · 843-846-2539
www.nemourswildlifefoundation.org

Volume 11 • No 4

Winter 2011

Page 1

IF YOU WERE HERE THEN...

On a spectacularly beautiful fall day along the Combahee River, historian and author Dr. Larry Rowland captivated a gathering of more than 100 people with a fascinating trip through nearly five hundred years of history about the area in the South Carolina Lowcountry where Nemours Plantation is located.

It was almost possible to hear the nearly-silent gliding of canoes as early Native Americans fished and hunted the land long before the arrival of the Spanish in the 1520's. Dr. Rowland brought to life the friendships and the conflicts between coastal tribes and newly-arrived settlers, and recounted years of bloody wars that raged as Yemassee Indian lands were overtaken by newcomers eager to establish pastures for their animals and fields for their agricultural pursuits.

Dr. Rowland spoke of the failed community known as Radnor which was located at the Combahee Ferry Crossing as early as 1734 but never flourished. He chronicled the lives of rice planters, notably the Middletons, owners of Nieuport Plantation, now included in today's Nemours Plantation, and the Heywards. Both were among families who became fabulously wealthy for several generations, only to see their homes and fields decimated during the Civil War, then finally completely destroyed through a combination of hurricanes, a lack of an adequate labor force and market competition from other parts of the country. Rice culture all but ceased along the Combahee River in the early 1920's.

After Dr. Rowland brought the audience to the brink of the Civil War, Dr. Stephen Wise, historian and director of the Parris Island Museum, set the stage for the skirmishes, occupation and destruction that took place between 1861 and 1865. In particular, he noted the destruction of Clay Hall at the hands of General Sherman's troops. Clay Hall Plantation, now included in Nemours Plantation, was owned by William Henry Heyward and, like surrounding plantations along the Combahee River, flourished during the golden age of rice culture in South Carolina.

A stone's throw from the banks of the Combahee River near where it flows beneath what is now Highway 17 sit the remains of an earthen fortification which guarded the land from

assault from enemies approaching by water. The site is believed to have been important to the 1863 raid led by Union Army Colonel James Montgomery on Confederate outposts during which Harriet Tubman is credited with assisting in gathering and ultimately freeing more than 500 slaves. At least two of those slaves joined the Union Army, served until the end of the war and then returned to the Lowcountry. They are buried in a cemetery alongside the fortification near the banks of the peaceful Combahee River.



L-R Dr. Stephen Wise, Dr. Ernie Wiggers and Dr. Larry Rowland shown during the Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation event in October.

And today....the area of which Drs. Rowland and Wise spoke so eloquently is home to countless species of waterfowl, amphibians and wildlife. Waterways that once supported rice fields now provide life-sustaining food and refuge for migrating birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Rice trunks, utilizing the same technology brought to the area in the early 1700's from West Africa for use in rice cultivation, are today used to raise and lower water levels in impoundments to meet the demands of migrating and indigenous wildlife.

Guests at Nemours' October event were treated to tours of historic sites, including several slave houses, unique for their tabby foundations and brick construction, as well as a rare and unusual structure known as a diamond trunk. The diamond

Continued on page 2

IF YOU WERE HERE THEN...

Continued from page 1

trunk at Nemours Plantation, one of only two still in existence, was located near a rice mill and provided for easy movement of small boats carrying rice from the fields. A tour of the earthen fort described by Dr. Wise was conducted by history buff and Nemours volunteer Craig Bowman.

Guests also traversed some of the dikes located on Nemours Plantation observing birdlife, including bald eagles, and heard presentations by wildlife biologists Dr. Brian Davis and Nemours Wildlife Foundation's senior biologist Eddie Mills with details of a multi-year study of mottled ducks in the ACE Basin funded in part by Ducks Unlimited and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Yet another tour took guests to Nemours' classroom for some up-close-and-personal encounters with a variety of local critters such as snakes, turtles, frogs and lizards presented by Lowcountry Institute education director Tony Mills.

From the riches of rice fields to the riches of wetlands now supporting an incredible array of shorebirds and wildlife, Nemours



Margaret Stacy gets acquainted with a corn snake during the Friends event.

Plantation has traversed the centuries and remained a vibrant part of the ACE Basin. Scientific research and educational programs conducted by Nemours Wildlife Foundation make unique and valuable contributions to life in the South Carolina Lowcountry and far beyond. Nemours' staff welcomes opportunities to showcase Nemours Plantation and the work of Nemours Wildlife Foundation with friends and visitors.

AN ABUNDANCE OF VISITORS....

- Nearly 90 landowners, land managers, private citizens and many agency representatives attended an all-day workshop in September to learn methods of controlling invasive plants, specifically the exotic Chinese Tallow Tree. The workshop, held at Nemours Plantation, was co-sponsored by USDA/NRCS, Clemson University, SCDNR, US Fish & Wildlife Service, South Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Control, and Nemours Wildlife Foundation.
- More than 40 hunters gathered at Nemours Plantation in early November for a Wounded Warrior hunt. Recently-returned vets from Iraq and Afghanistan, other disabled sportsmen, and young hunters identified through Outdoor Dreams Foundation enjoyed hunting, camaraderie, good food and a wonderful outdoor experience, thanks to 21 properties and dozens of volunteers, both military and civilian. The hunt produced 12 bucks, 2 does and 2 wild hogs.
- Members of the South Carolina Historical Society were at Nemours Plantation on a bright September day for lunch and a lecture following their tour of Auldbrass Plantation.
- Vince Musi, a photographer working on a photo essay for *National Geographic*, has spent time recently in the ACE Basin, including Nemours Plantation, enjoying spectacular vistas and seasonal migrations.
- Twenty-six students from the Clemson University/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation toured Nemours Plantation's slave houses and diamond truck on a recent chilly fall morning. The feedback: "It was awesome!"
- Phillip Gentry, a writer for *South Carolina Sportsman* magazine, joined a group of kayakers recently at Nemours Plantation compiling research for future articles on kayak fishing.
- Grad student Jennifer Fill routinely monitors free-ranging Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes on Nemours Plantation using radio-telemetry. Her study will serve to inform land managers on the burn regime that is most effective for restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem and conservation of endemic species.
- Jeff Moore is monitoring waterfowl and other birds using wetlands on Nemours Plantation and other properties in the ACE Basin for Ducks Unlimited.

MORE OBSERVATIONS...



L-R Justin Rickenbaker, Ray Bass and Robert Kitler take a well-deserved break from their work on Nemours Plantation

In previous columns, this enthusiastic Nemours Wildlife Foundation staffer has waxed poetic about often-unexpected critter encounters as well as opportunities to be an observer as extraordinarily dedicated and talented conservation and wildlife professionals ply their trade. It has been an amazing experience for nearly two years to listen, watch and learn from the experts. Never before have I thrilled to the sight of Swallow-tailed Kites feeding in flight, or Bald Eagle chicks testing their wings prior leaving the safety of the nest. And watching the antics of Nemours Plantation's fox squirrels could easily consume an entire day!

But, it's the people behind the scenes at Nemours Plantation who also deserve attention and much gratitude for their quiet

stewardship to the very things that so many people enjoy on their visits to Nemours. Most 10,000 acre properties have significantly more people managing the day-to-day challenges, but at Nemours it is Ray Bass, Robert Kitler and Justin Rickenbaker who maintain the roads and the dikes, construct and install rice trunks, manage prescribed fires, keep thousands of acres of grass, trees and other vegetation under control, monitor wildlife activity, manage water levels in impoundments as the seasons and the migrating waterfowl require, maintain the equipment necessary to tackle all these tasks, and respond to the often-unexpected chores that crop up at what is usually the least opportune time.

Ray was hired in Eugene duPont's lifetime and has worked and lived on Nemours Plantation for 26 years. Robert and Justin have each now completed 10 years of employment.

Their dedication to Mr. duPont's vision for the property and their own love for the land is evident in everything they do. In addition to their job responsibilities, the men spend significant amounts of their personal time providing outdoor experiences for chronically ill children, often lifting a wheelchair-bound child into a deer stand, or perhaps cleaning and cooking just-caught fish to provide supper for a handicapped child and his family.

If you have visited Nemours Plantation and marveled at its incredible beauty and pristine vistas, take a moment to think of Nemours' land management team: Ray Bass, Robert Kitler and Justin Rickenbaker. Nice work, guys!

- Kay Merrill

MEMORIALS AND HONORS

A gift to Nemours Wildlife Foundation provides a lasting tribute to honor the memory of a loved one or friend. We encourage you to consider a tax deductible donation which we will acknowledge to you and the person of your choosing.

In addition, please consider a donation in honor of any occasion – a birthday or anniversary, for example – which merits special attention. We will happily acknowledge your thoughtful gift to your honoree(s).

We are honored to acknowledge these recent memorials:

**In memory of
Irene duPont Waters**

Gay Carter
Mr. and Mrs. Maitland S. Chase III
Ashley M. Hoefler
Mr. and Mrs. Michael G. McShane
Jeffery D. Murrie
Lynn L. Simmonds
Ann and Gay Stackhouse
Mr. and Mrs. Jamie Walker

**In memory of
Paul Adams Emmons**

Ann S. Gillen
Kay Emmons Merrill

**In memory of
Eddy Williams Hayes and
Lawson Hayes, Sr.**

Dean and Jean Harrigal



Workshop participants observe a demonstration of treatment and control of the exotic invasive Chinese Tallow Tree.



The USMC band travelled in grand style from Parris Island for the Wounded Warrior hunt.



A surprising number of people (nearly 90 in all) attended a workshop at Nemours Plantation on control of the invasive Chinese Tallow Tree.

IN MEMORIAM

Irene duPont Waters, the eldest of Eugene duPont's five daughters, passed away at her residence at Bishop Gadsden in Charleston on November 17, 2011.

The Board and staff of Nemours Wildlife Foundation extend sympathy to her family.

Nemours Wildlife Foundation is honored to be designated as the recipient of gifts in her memory.



Nemours' senior biologist Eddie Mills explains how mottled ducks with implanted transmitters are tracked from a small airplane. Mississippi State University professor and mottled duck project advisor Dr. Brian Davis looks on.



Kayak fishing is a fast-growing sport in the Lowcountry.



Laura duPont of Greenville and her son Jim Johnston of Georgetown enjoy a spectacular fall day during the Friends of Nemours Wildlife Foundation annual event at Nemours Plantation.

We understand that there are many options for your year-end charitable giving. We hope you will consider Nemours Wildlife Foundation when you are making your list and checking it twice. Nemours Wildlife Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity. Your tax-deductible donation will help to support scientific research and educational programs year-round. Thank you!

Nemours Wildlife Foundation
161 Nemours Plantation Road
Yemassee, SC 29945



Participants in the Wounded Warrior event take a break from the action.

NEMOURS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

161 Nemours Plantation Road, Yemassee, SC 29945

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Colden R. Battey, Jr., Esq.

Chairman
Beaufort, SC

John R. Cope, Esq., D. of Min.

Emeritus
Washington, DC

Laura E. duPont

Emeritus
Greenville, SC

Pat F. McGarity

Beaufort, SC

Genette duPont McShane

Secretary
Johns Island, SC

Michael G. McShane

Emeritus
Johns Island, SC

Daniel W. Stacy, Jr., Esq.

Pawleys Island, SC

Martha Lynn Webb, CPA

Treasurer
Beaufort, SC

Ernie P. Wiggers, Ph.D.

President & CEO
Beaufort, SC



Nemours Plantation is all decked out for the holidays, and we hope you are too. All of us here wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and much peace, joy and prosperity in the New Year!