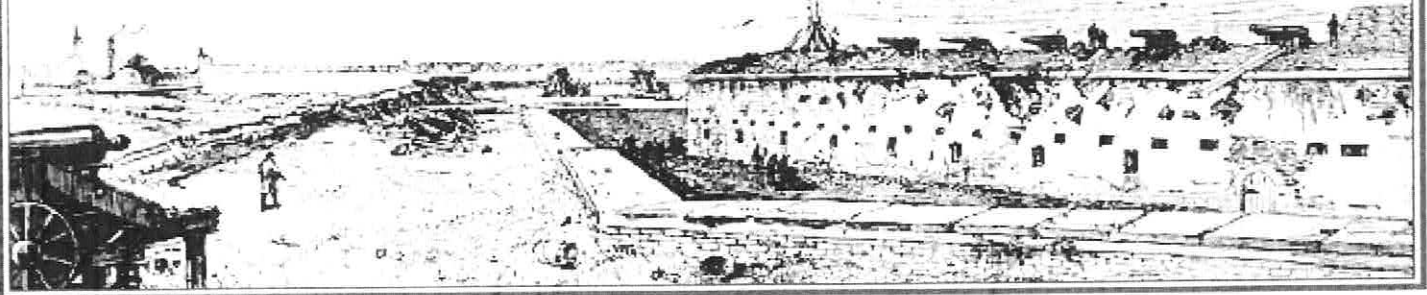


Fort Macon Ramparts

Published by the Friends of Fort Macon

Volume XVII, Issue 1
Spring 2010



“Year of the Birds”

by Randy Newman

Fort Macon State Park will pay special tribute to its feathery residents and visitors in 2010 by celebrating the “Year of the Birds.” State Parks Director, Lewis Ledford, stated “putting special emphasis on birds in 2010 can give added depth and clarity to our interpretive programs and education efforts.”

Throughout the year, park staff and volunteers will focus on birds and bird-watchers, providing education programs to enhance the park visitors’ knowledge of birds and their required habitats.

Fort Macon State Park will open several exhibits on birding in the exhibit hall of the Coastal Education and Visitor Center during late summer. Included will be a special exhibit on the “Key to North American Birds” by Dr. Elliott Coues, Fort Macon surgeon and a renowned naturalist who was posted at the Fort in 1869-1870.

With over 309 species of birds being sighted at the park over the years, Fort Macon State Park provides one of North Carolina’s best locations for bird watchers to view birds. During the summer, park visitors come from around the world in hopes of viewing the Painted Bunting that comes to the park to nest during the summer months. During the winter months birders search for the Purple Sandpipers which often can be found on the Park’s rock jetties. Red Knots can still be found along the Park beaches

during their spring and fall migrations. Each year fewer and fewer Red Knots are seen and visitors are encouraged to take the time to enjoy these magnificent birds in case some ornithologists are correct and their current decline leads to extinction.

Thousands of migratory birds make their regular seasonal journeys migrating either to or through Fort Macon State Park. If visitors could ask them just one question it might be “where have you traveled?” Since we are unable to communicate with the birds verbally, researchers have turned to bird bands in hopes of gathering information that will help us understand the movement, survival rate and behavior of bird species. The North American Bird Banding Program is administered by the United States Department of the Interior. Bands vary from colored bands to aluminum bands inscribed “CALL 1-800-327 BAND and Write BIRD BAND LAUREL MD 20708 USA” followed by a unique 8 or 9 digit number.

So, Park staff members are keeping an eye out for bands. Listed below are some of the more interesting information that Park staff has gathered from tagged birds that were observed at Fort Macon State Park:

» On March 5, 1999, Song Sparrow apparently killed by a vehicle on park highway. Song Sparrow bore tag #1571-58695. Information provided by tag showed the

THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL INDICATES THE MONTH AND YEAR

THAT YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRED OR WILL EXPIRE

bird had hatched in 1996 or earlier; banded at Ridgewood, New Jersey on October 29, 1996.

» On March 11, 1993 a Northern Gannet washed up dead on ocean beach. The bird bore tag #0618-14788. Information provided by tag showed the bird was too young to fly when tagged on August 26, 1989 at Funk Island, Newfoundland.

» On November 16, 2006 immature Brown Pelican was standing in the fort parking lot. Bird was not injured. Bird bore tag #0938-59420. Information from tag showed the bird was banded on June 11, 2006. It was too young to fly when banded. Location of banding was Lola, North Carolina by Dr. John Weske.

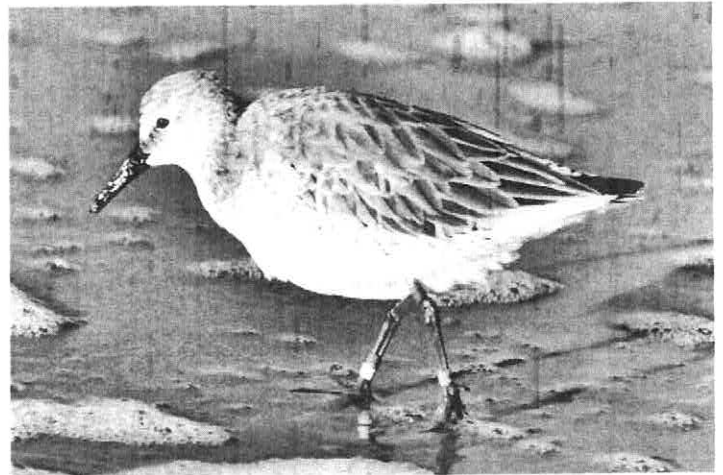
» On May 13, 2006 a flock of Red Knot was observed on the Inlet beach. One bird bore color bands (upper right leg-- orange, bottom right leg-- blue over red over yellow). This color band combination was from a bird banded in Argentina. Patricia M. Gonzalez, Coordinator of Programa Humedales Fund Inalafquen reported: "This bird was banded at San Antonio Oeste, Rio Negro, Argentina in March 1998. This is an individually color banded bird with a story! Usually seen every year at San Antonio Oeste during northward migration."

Fort Macon will be offering bird walks and other special programs throughout the year. Special state park "Year of the Birds" bandanas can be purchased at the Park office for only \$3.00 each.

Call the Park office at (252) 726-3775 to obtain the date of the next bird walk or if you are interested in helping provide bird walks to the public.



Painted Bunting



Red Knot



Purple Sandpiper

To see these beautiful birds in color, please visit the Fort Macon Friends website at <http://www.clis.com/friends>

Superintendent's Update



Randy Newman

We are all looking forward to a new and exciting year here at Fort Macon. With the opening of the Coastal Education and Visitor Center, the Tour Guide training that began in February, and volunteers staffing the information desk, we are off to a good start. We were happy to see the returning guides and the eagerness of the new trainees. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of these programs to the park and to our guests. Without the Friends of Fort Macon's help, we could not meet the demands for the numerous programs requested. With the addition of two Science Educators, the Park is hoping to utilize the large auditorium in the Coastal Education Center and expand the number and variety of programs that we are able to offer.

This fall we will be opening our 4,000 square foot exhibit hall with exhibits on coastal ecology. I am very excited about the educational experience that our visitors will receive when visiting the Park. With this addition the park will have nearly 10,000 square feet of exhibits on the cultural and natural history of the area.

The Park's Summer Concert Series will begin June 4th. I have predicted sunny weather for all the concert dates. The concert series has grown into a very successful event, and I look forward to its continued success.

Thinking about the summer, we are beginning to interview people for our seasonal positions. So, if you have a child, grandchild or if you are a kid at heart, get an application in to the Park as soon as you can. We would like to have these positions filled by April. The positions that we have are for park attendants, refreshment stand clerks, and lifeguards.

Randy

Future Meetings & Speakers

The Friends meet at the Golden Coral in Morehead City on the 1st Wednesday of each month. Brief business meetings are followed by wonderful speakers. Be sure to put these meetings on your calendars!

April 7	Richard Olsen, Board Member of the Aurora Museum Foundation will speak on "Fossils from the Potash Corp. Aurora Mine: the Geological History of Eastern North Carolina."
May 6	TBA
June 2	Mike Carraway will be our speaker. He will present Sonny Williamson's PowerPoint program on blockade runners.
July 7	Betty Ray McCain, former head of the State Department of Cultural Resources, will present "History Matters."
August 4	Keith Hardison, Director of the State Historic Properties
September 1	Edward Ellis, Jr. will talk about his book <i>In This Small Place</i> dealing with the history of Havelock and Craven County.
October 6	Paula Gillikin, Site Manager of the Rachel Carson Reserve, will present an overview of the island and its horses.
November 3	Xavier Basurto, Assistant Professor of Sustainability Science at the Duke Marine Lab, will speak on "Small Scale Fisheries."

Update from Tom Kelly President, FoFM

Hello to all Friends of Ft. Macon. Needless to say, the major event in the past year for all our great volunteers has been the opening and gradual outfitting of the Coastal Education and Visitor Center. After years of planning, encouragement, and finally seeing the building in place, our President of 8 years Grayden Paul decided it's best to stay involved with us but to step back from the day to day responsibility. I hope I can justify his and our Board's trust in me by helping the Friends take advantage of the opportunities we now have as the new Coastal Education and Visitor's Center exhibits and programs kick in over the next few months.

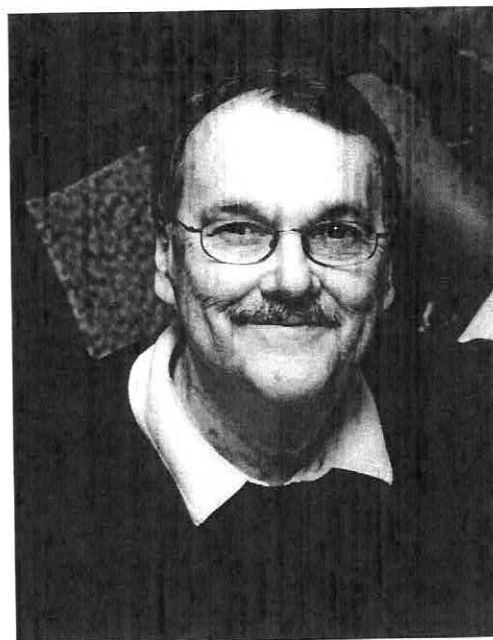
If ANYONE has not seen the new facility yet, make plans to visit...you won't regret it. I won't go into detail (they've been handled well by the press and our Ramparts issues), but can say that I have been amazed at how a modern, state of the art "green" facility could be built in a way that complements our historic fort so well. From the brickwork to the arches to the woodwork, the building echoes Ft. Macon in a thoughtful, beautifully executed way. We have to thank our Park system people and the fort staff, Rangers and Superintendents (first Jody Merritt and now Randy Newman) for this achievement—it is a gift to us all.

Now, however, the Friends have both a challenge and an opportunity to help the CEVC fulfill its promise, and that's already started. Besides the many tour guides and others who continue to educate visitors and help with activities at the fort, we now have a good group of Info Desk volunteers. As the exhibits get installed and more nature-oriented programs evolve through the Ranger staff, we should be there to help make those new programs a success.

Continuing business, the Summer Concert Series is set for this year, and we look forward to big crowds again (and perfect weather!). Our lunch speaker program is going great this year. Board Secretary Gwynn Towles arranged for a great line-up of speakers. Gwynn works hard to schedule top-notch speakers. Not easy to do, but she keeps improving this program. Luncheon meetings are on the first Wednesday of every month at 11:30 in the Golden Corral Restaurant, Morehead City.

Though we're just getting started, here are some of the new initiatives we have begun to work on in 2010:

» The Elliott Coues Nature Trail will be re-built after years of non-use. It will wind around behind the new building and re-enter the parking lot near Bogue Sound.



» Gwynn is spearheading an eventual archaeological excavation of a residence on the park grounds. She's working on getting us a professional archaeologist to oversee the project, perhaps with some student help. We hope this will eventually yield many interesting items for display.

» We formed a committee to develop an exciting and novel educational experience...for now, call it "The Ghosts of Ft. Macon—Real Characters from Our Past." The idea is to have groups of visitors spend a few minutes each with actors portraying real Ft. Macon "ghosts"—Robert E. Lee, the fort's architect and a mason, Dr. Coues (surgeon and ornithologist), etc. We hope to pull this off as an evening event in the fall. It should be educational (we're counting on Ranger/Historian Paul Branch for content) and entertaining for adults and kids.

» We are attempting to procure carronades now located at the Norfolk Navy Yard. They were made in Scotland and are the exact type used in our counterfire galleries and on the ramparts during the siege in 1862. We have enlisted the help of U. S. Rep. Walter Jones to try for at least one of these cannons. His office has the right contacts—we hope to get a yea or nay from the Navy soon. If they agree to provide one on a permanent loan, for example, we can use it as the centerpiece of a new learning exhibit within the fort. Fingers crossed, this would be a really exciting development for the Friends and the Rangers.

» We should have an herbarium displaying plant samples from all over NC including Bogue Banks by this summer. A collection of about 350 plant samples from a 1965 study in the State has been brought to our attention. It

is now in a small college in New Jersey and arrangements are being made for a permanent loan. This could form the basis for an educational program, lead to an expansion effort by biology or botany students, or simply spark an interest for plant lovers.

» We have had new car stickers made that will enhance the welcome package for new Friends. These stickers (think oval, white with green print, a fort picture, and "Friends of Ft. Macon" on top, "North Carolina" on the bottom) are so cool they may become a fundraiser for us as well.

» Discussions have started with the State about building a replica of an officer's house near or in the fort. This is early stage—I will keep you posted as this evolves.

All these things are just a start, but to pull these and other ideas off we need more and more active volunteers. You can reach me anytime at tomkelly@ec.rr.com with your thoughts. The CEVC is a new chapter in the history of Ft. Macon State Park and the Friends of Ft. Macon are beginning a new chapter right along with it.

All the best, stay healthy and safe, and

Cheers, Tom



Garyden Paul served as President of the Friends for eight years. At the January meeting he was presented with a plaque of appreciation by the Friend's new president, Tom Kelly.

Introducing our new president.....

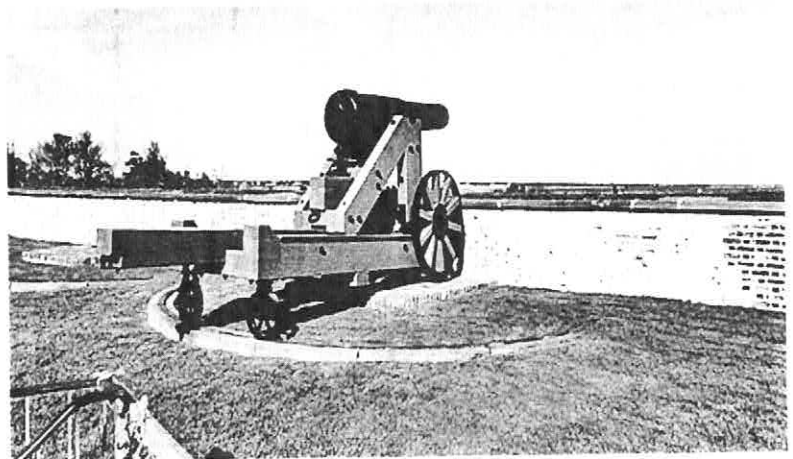
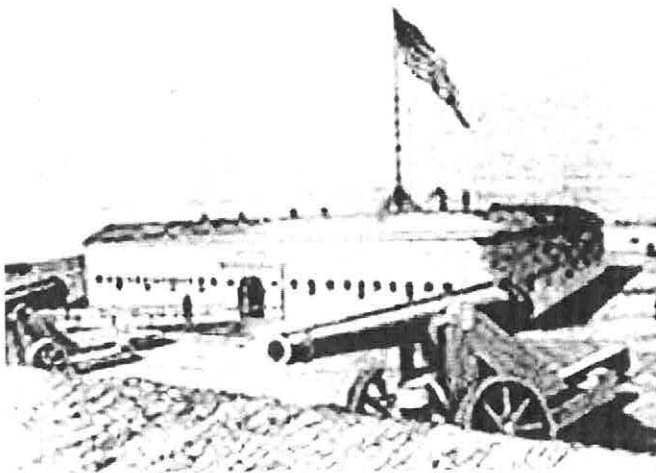
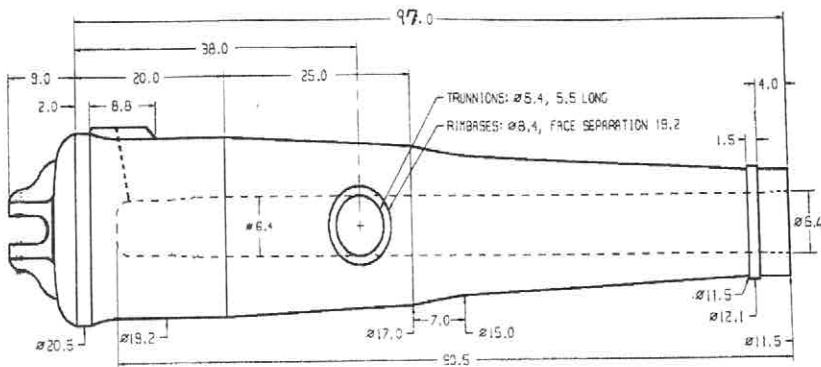
Kathy and Tom have had a vacation home in Emerald Isle since 1987 and moved there permanently after retiring in 2005. Tom enjoyed 30 years in professional publishing, starting as an editor while still in law school, and ending as an executive vice-president with the Thomson Corporation, now Thomson Reuters Inc. TRI helps legal, financial, scientific and healthcare professionals in their practices and is the largest law publisher and financial information provider with over 60,000 employees worldwide.

Tom became interested in Ft. Macon and its history early on, became a tour guide as soon as he could in 2005, and has managed our summer concert series for the last four years. He also served as VP of the Friends under Grayden Paul for the last two years and has spoken to civic and social groups about Ft. Macon and the Friends.

Wanting to "stay useful" while enjoying life in Emerald Isle, Tom has become involved in other volunteer activities besides the Friends. He is a member of the Carteret Community College Foundation Board, recently served on the Emerald Isle Board of Adjustment and now serves on the EI Planning Board. Tom is also a recent President of the Fairway Investment Club in Cape Carteret and enjoys keeping up with developments in the business world.

Students Bolster Cannon Defense

Reprint of an article appearing in the January 2010 issue of *The Steward*, Newsletter of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation



A faltering cannon defense at Fort Macon is soon to be relieved by a column of students and teachers from Wayne Community College in Goldsboro.

With sheets of aluminum, modern machine tools and industrial know-how, the college has volunteered to build new gun carriages for a pair of replica 32-pounder cannon at Fort Macon State Park. The project will replace wooden carriages that are rotting under the assault of coastal winds and salt spray.

Fabricating a Civil War-era product with modern technology and business practices is a toolman's dream," said Kirk Keller, mechanical engineering instructor at the college. "It's quite a project and we consider it quite an honor," Keller said. "It should give us some good notice for the program here. And, it's better than building widgets."

Keller said that 40-45 students in mechanical engineering, machining and welding technology programs at the college are involved in building the first carriage that could be completed by February.

Over the summer, Keller and other instructors studied 1840s-era drawings of the original carriages dispatched from the fort and fine-tuned engineering details so students entering the fall semester could get right to work.

Fiberglass replicas of both a smoothbore cannon and a rifled version have done a good job adding realism to the fort's exhibits, but the wooden carriages have repeatedly been replaced, said Paul Branch, a ranger who regularly gives interpretive programs on the fort's role in defending Confederate eastern North Carolina.

"These wooden carriages just don't last long as outdoor exhibits and it's just too expensive to totally rebuild or replace them every few years," he said. "The National Park Service has gone to aluminum or steel for the gun carriages



Annual Tour Guide Recognition

Ranger Paul Branch presented all the guides with certificates of appreciation from the State Park. The event was catered by the Golden Corral, and entertainment was provided by friends of Joe Beam, including Mayor Garner from Newport—a great group of singers and pickers who love to get together and entertain.

The Tour Guides are spearheaded by John Rhodes and Joe Beam.



Photos courtesy of Bill Meserve

continued from previous page

they have in some of their forts like ours, and they've proved to be quite successful."

Faced with paying up to \$90,000 for two new wooden carriages, Branch and Johnny Johnson, east district maintenance supervisor began looking for options. Gene Peacock, the district's interpretation and education specialist, hit upon the idea of putting them in touch with Keller at the community college.

After many hours of meetings and pre-planning, Keller, Johnson, Peacock and Branch had reached an agreement. With the student volunteers, the fort will instead pay \$12,000 to \$16,000 for each carriage. But the benefits go beyond the savings, Branch said.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for the school and the people working on it, not only for the experience they'll gain, but also for helping out the State in a bad time and being a part of producing something that will be enjoyed by thousands of visitors," he said. Keller said that the school has drawn interest from Bentonville

Battlefield and Fort Fisher, both Civil War historic sites.

Keller hopes to transport one of the cannon replicas to the college for close study because building a carriage is no simple job. By the mid-1800s, they'd become quite complicated. The original, 5,200-pound cannon on Fort Macon's battlements used so-called "Barbette" carriages with two interlocking structures. A long, bottom chassis pivoted on the brick gun mounts of the fort, and a top carriage piece – shaped like an inverted "A" – supported the cannon barrel. As the cannon fired, the top carriage slid to the back of the chassis. After firing, the cannon was reloaded and rolled back into firing position using the top carriage.

Replicating the device in aluminum means smoothing and hiding welds and fashioning fake bolt heads and the like, Branch said.