

# Field Notes

Friends of Plant Conservation newsletter

August 2017 / Vol. IX Issue 3

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Photo: Melissa McGaw/NCWRC

## Alvin Braswell, FoPC Vice-President, Wins Prestigious Wildlife Conservation Award

**RALEIGH, N.C. (July 28, 2017)** — The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission presented the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award on Thursday to Alvin Braswell, a renowned herpetologist, naturalist and leader in the conservation of North Carolina's wildlife, particularly reptiles and amphibians.

Wildlife Commission Executive Director Gordon Myers presented Braswell the award, along with a painting by wildlife artist Duane Raver, during the Commission's business meeting in Raleigh.

The Commission presents the prestigious Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award annually to individuals who make outstanding contributions to wildlife diversity in North Carolina and who are considered leaders in wildlife resources conservation.

Over the span of nearly 50 years, Braswell has developed a reputation as a leading researcher and conservationist in the field of herpetology — the study of reptiles and amphibians. The Raleigh resident worked for more than 40 years at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences where he started his career as a research curator and later became Curator of Herpetology, Laboratory Research Director and Deputy Director.

During his career, Braswell contributed greatly toward the conservation of the state's native wildlife, particularly turtles. He was instrumental in helping to develop legislation in 2003 that led to the prohibition of the take of more than four turtles without a permit — a law that has helped to sustain turtle populations in the state.

Braswell also has authored or co-authored more than 55 journal articles as well as two well-known and respected guides for identifying reptiles and amphibians in the mid-Atlantic region — *Reptiles of North Carolina and Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia*.



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**Friends of Plant Conservation**

*Braswell, continued....*

Braswell was a key player in bringing together a small group of herpetology enthusiasts in 1978 to form the N.C. Herpetological Society, whose members work to foster appreciation and a better understanding of North Carolina's herpetofauna through field trips, mentoring and education programs. He served as a member of the N.C. Plant Conservation Scientific Committee for 26 years, seven as the chair, and also served as a member of the Wildlife Commission's Nongame and Wildlife Advisory Committee (NWAC) for 23 years. The NWAC comprises 15 North Carolina citizens who provide advice to the Commission on nongame wildlife conservation concerns across the state.

Braswell has received numerous honors for his commitment to wildlife conservation including the Governor's Wildlife Conservationist of the Year in 2006 and the Governor's Award for Excellence in 2011. He also received the Governor's Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 2014, which is bestowed upon North Carolinians who have a record of extraordinary service to their organizations, their communities and to the State of North Carolina.

While Braswell is well known for his conservation work in herpetology, he is also considered one of North Carolina's premier naturalists, having conducted field studies in every county of the state. He knows the Tar Heel state's many and varied wildlife species, their habitats and their behaviors and he readily shares his knowledge with his fellow professionals, many friends and acquaintances and students across the state.

Upon his retirement from the museum in 2015, Braswell was granted an Emeritus Research Coordinator position at the museum, which has allowed him to return to the field and the classroom, where he can continue his conservation work.

"More than any of his professional accomplishments, Alvin's contribution to the appreciation and conservation North Carolina's wildlife diversity is mainly personal," said Linda Pearsall, who was one of two people to nominate Braswell for this year's honor, and a former recipient of the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award herself. "Everyone who has ever spent a quiet hour by the fire or a day in the field with Alvin has come away enriched with new knowledge and inspired by new appreciation.

"As a former student of Doctor Quay, he embodies the commitment to wildlife conservation and public education that Dr. Quay demonstrated."

Braswell is the 12<sup>th</sup> person to receive the honor. The first recipient was Dr. Quay, a former professor of zoology at N.C. State University and self-described "full-time volunteer and unpaid environmental activist." Quay, who passed away in April 2012, served on a variety of conservation boards while lobbying state agencies for various environmental causes.

Story by Jodie Owen/ncwrc

Story from <http://www.ncwildlife.org>



Alvin Braswell at our Annual Meeting last year.



# 2017 Field Trip and Events Schedule

*Sign up early as group size is limited according to the site.*

**Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 10:00—3:00— ON THE TRAIL OF *Liatris helleri*** at Paddy Mountain in Ashe County with Chris Ulrey and Lesley Starke. If headed to the top, this could be a strenuous trip, but we will be scouting around looking for Heller's Blazing Star...along with a lot of other blooming wildflowers. Wear your hiking boots, bring a lunch and water and enjoy a day out botanizing. Moderate to strenuous.

**September 22 (Friday)— A GENTLE APPROACH TO CEDAR CLIFF** in search of *Silene ovata* (Ovate Catchfly) in bloom. Though heading to the top is a challenge, but poking around on a slow ascent may help us to locate the elusive Catchfly. There will be lots of other things to see: American bittersweet, spiked crested coralroot, beard lichen and more. Bring sturdy boots, lunch, and plenty of water. Resting places along the way will make this a great trip, and if you haven't been to the top, it's a must see. Strenuous, depending on how high you want to climb.

**October 6 (Friday) — ON THE HUNT FOR TIGER SALAMANDERS AND *OXYPOLIS CANBYI*.** Tunstall Bay/McIntosh are known to be home to Canby's Dropwort and Tiger Salamanders, along with many other plant and herp species. Alvin Braswell, Lesley Starke, and Jenny Stanley will lead the way around this site in Scotland County. Easy.

**November 3 (Friday) - 2017 ANNUAL MEETING: EXTINCT PLANTS OF NORTH AMERICA.** A new format this year: *an afternoon gathering of Friends*. Join us at the NC Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill, NC to hear Wes Knapp discuss when extinct plants are listed as extinct: does it happen when the last known plant disappears, or are they functionally extinct much earlier? There are lessons to be learned, especially by keeping up with plants on the Watch Lists of the NC Natural Heritage Program. Also presenting will be Lesley Starke and Jenny Stanley with NCPCP; an update on the state of FoPC; election of the Board of Directors, and more. Lunch available at 12:30, meeting begins at 1:30 and ends at 4:30. Registrations materials available soon on the website—[www.ncplantfriends.org](http://www.ncplantfriends.org)—and via MailChimp.

**Register: [Nancy.Stewart@ncagr.gov](mailto:Nancy.Stewart@ncagr.gov) or call 919-707-3755**



*Oxypolis canbyi*, Canby's dropwort.

On the NCPCP and Federal list as Endangered. Is it Extinct in NC, or so close that it soon will be?

Photo by: Marge Boyer, courtesy USFS.

## Interesting news on conservation and diversity....

### The precarious state of Earth's national animal symbols

by Brandon Keim | Jun 21, 2017

India's Ganges River dolphins and Uganda's grey-crowned cranes, Arabian oryx in Oman and the white-tailed eagles of Poland: they're some of Earth's literal flagship species, the official animals of nations and states. Yet for all they're venerated as symbols, their reality is often troubled.

Endangered species stories are nothing new, but the national-animal framing, introduced by ecologists Neil Hammerschlag and Austin Gallagher the University of Miami in the journal *BioScience*, raises a philosophical question. "What does it mean for a country's national identity," they write, "if the symbol chosen to represent its people becomes extinct because of human threats?"

Gallagher and Hammerschlag are the first scholars to systematically examine the well-being of actual flagship species formally used as national symbols: 231 of them, to be exact, belonging to 142 countries. (Some nations have more than one.)

the researchers found that more than one-third of national animals are threatened. Nearly half are undergoing population declines. Projecting population trends into the not-too-distant future "would render 45% of all animal symbols as threatened with extinction," write Hammerschlag and Gallagher—yet as of now, "only 16% ... are listed by the IUCN as receiving some sort of protection within the country where they are the national symbol."

approximately one-fifth of animal symbols are presently increasing in population, including bald eagles and American bison in the United States. These are conservation success stories and an example of how national animalhood can be harnessed as an organizing principle. "Given their inherent value to a country's identity, animal symbols are likely relatively easy targets to gain public support for their protection," Hammerschlag and Gallagher write.

Source: Anthropocene, [www.anthropocenemagazine.org](http://www.anthropocenemagazine.org)

Hammerschlag, Neil and Austin J. Gallagher. "Extinction Risk and Conservation of the Earth's National Animal Symbols." *BioScience*, 2017.

### Woodpecker Woes: The Right Tree Can Be Hard to Find

by Natasha Vizcarra, a science writer in Boulder, CO, for *Science Findings-Pacific NW Research Station*, USFS Publication, Iss. 199 Aug. 2017

These birds excavate their nests out of solid wood, and because their nests are often well protected against predators and the environment, other species use and compete for their old, vacant nests. The presence of cavity-excavating birds in forests has far-reaching effects on species richness and ecosystem health.

Given the species' importance, Teresa Lorenz, a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station wanted to find out why cavity-excavating birds do not use many trees seemingly suitable for nesting. This puzzle has eluded researchers for decades. Lorenz and her colleagues also wanted to know what role wood hardness plays in the birds' nest site selection.

The resulting study in the eastern Cascades of Washington found that cavity-excavating birds preferred to nest in trees with significantly softer interior wood. The researchers also found that at-risk species were nesting within burned areas where up to 96 percent of the trees had unsuitably hard wood. This suggests that many trees and snags previously considered suitable for cavity excavating birds actually may not be.

In dry forests, prescribed mixed-severity fire may be a useful tool for creating suitable nesting habitat for cavity excavators



A pine marten looks out of a pileated woodpecker nest cavity. Many species require or prefer vacated woodpecker cavities, but cannot excavate the cavity themselves. Thus, they rely on woodpeckers to construct habitat for them. Photo by Teresa Lorenz.

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## From The Board



What great trips we have had this year. The rain was plentiful early on, the temperatures unpredictable, the blooms in abundance.

Please join us for a Field Trip, and if you don't see one of interest to you, drop us a note and tell us what you would like to see or do.

We are looking for a few people who would like to be more closely involved with plant conservation. There are a number of ways to join in and we can work with you to make sure we don't infringe too much on your time. Take a look below and send a note to one of us (email addresses to the left):

**Finance committee:** work with the Treasurer once a year to complete a review of our books.

**Program planning:** Work with a board member to plan our annual meeting, field trips, or seminars.

**Preserve Workdays:** staff can always use a hand with land Management activities including invasives removal, trash pick up, plant monitoring, plant inventories, and boundary walks. As you have time or on a regular schedule.

**Newsletter:** one of the best ways to keep up with what is going on is to work on the newsletter. We have a template or you can make your own. Articles are submitted by staff, board members, Friends members or others in the plant conservation field.

**Website:** Our website should be updated monthly, but we have an easy platform, so it can be done quickly. There is room for creativity, or you can just follow the existing format.

**Development:** If you don't mind asking for money this is the place for you. We are small and want to grow, but we put no defined goals on those willing to help. This is one of the best ways to promote the conservation of our imperiled species.

**Don't be shy....we're waiting for you!**

Kathy Schlosser

“Headwater streams, defined as first- and second-order channels (Strahler, 1952), cumulatively constitute the great majority of channel length within a river network (Downing et al., 2012). A substantial body of research on the physical, chemical, and biological functions of headwater streams clearly indicates their importance to the entire river network, yet these relatively small streams are most likely to be ignored by legal protections extended to rivers and to be aggressively altered in connection with diverse land uses. “



K. K. Schlosser

Ellen Wohl. **The significance of small streams.** *Frontiers of Earth Science*, 2017; 11 (3): 447 DOI: [10.1007/s11707-017-0647-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11707-017-0647-y)

## **NCPCP Preserve Stewards**

The Preserve Steward program has been revised, and the following Stewards have been assigned an access permit for one or more of the Preserves. If a workday is being held by staff or by a Steward under the direction of staff, the Steward may call for help. If you are nearby, or willing to travel a little, contact the steward for directions and details.

Access permits for any other purposes must be obtained from Lesley Starke (Lesley.Starke@ncagr.gov), and are granted for research or educational purposes in keeping with the mission of NCPCP. Anyone on a preserve is expected to have a signed permit for the current visit on their person.

BAT FORK BOG, Henderson Co.:	Tom Baugh
BIG POND BAY, Cumberland Co.:	Joan Schneier
CARAWAY, McDowell Co.:	French Broad Garden Club,
CEDAR MOUNTAIN BOG, Transylvania Co:	Torry Nergart
DENSON’S CREEK, Montgomery Co.:	Nancy Adamson
DURHAM PRESERVES, Durham Co.:	Jarrod Morrice
TATER HILL, Watauga County:	Matt Estep
ENO DIABASE, Durham:	Herb and Pat Amyx
HARVEST FIELD, Randolph County:	Kathy Schlosser, Mimi Westervelt
MINERAL SPRING BARRENS, Union Co:	Lisa Tompkins
PONDBERRY BAY, Sampson Co.:	Bill Scott
REDLAIR, Gaston Co.:	Haywood Rankin

**If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. But if he spends his days as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is deemed an industrious and enterprising citizen.**  
~Henry David Thoreau



# Fun with Invasives at Bat Fork Bog...

Lopping flowering heads and pulling *Phalaris* up by the roots. (Left, Cheryl; Right, Lesley)



Lesley in a tug-of-war with Asian bittersweet.



Bridget and Brian draft water from the creek.



Jenny's haul of invasives, or as she says "insanity in a bog."

Photos courtesy Jenny Stanley.



Hauling off the invasives.

## Recommended Reading...

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For additional titles, see the Books page on our website: [www.ncplantfriends.org](http://www.ncplantfriends.org)

### **The Last Empty Places: A Past and Present Journey Through the Blank Spots on the American Map**

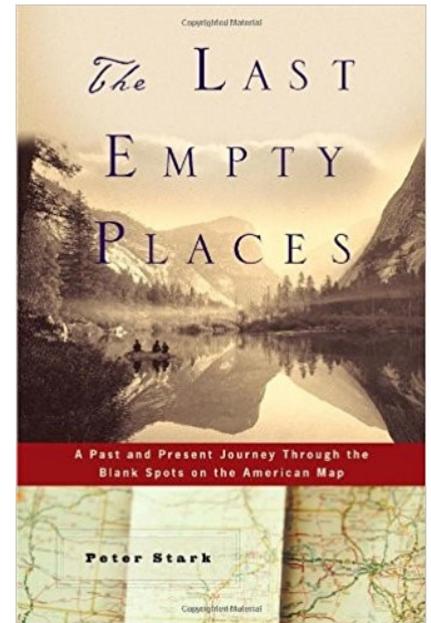
Peter Stark, Ballantine Books, 2010.

Stark takes the reader to four of the most remote, wild and unpopulated areas of the United States outside of Alaska – to the rivers and forests of Northern Maine, to rugged, unpopulated Western Pennsylvania that lies only a short distance from the big cities of the East, to the haunting canyons of Central New Mexico, and to the vast arid basins of Southeast Oregon.

He finds that each has played an important role in shaping our American idea of wilderness through the influential “natural philosophers” who visited these four regions and wrote about their experiences – Henry David Thoreau, John and William Bartram, John Muir and Aldo Leopold, sharing his own personal experiences on his own or with his family.

A thought-provoking and inspiring book.

Kathy Schlosser



### **The Wild Places**

Robert Macfarlane, Penguin Books, 2007

Robert Macfarlane writes with eloquence and imagination, creating another book that I will read again just for the sheer pleasure.

Macfarlane determines to visit a series of breathtaking journeys through some of the most remarkable landscapes of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. He climbs, walks, and swims (usually in icy waters) by day and spends his nights sleeping on cliff-tops, in ancient meadows and wildwoods, and on storm-thrashed beaches. He entwines history, memory, and landscape in a 'bewitching evocation of wildness and its vital importance.'

I bought this as a paperback and regret that, so I purchased *The Old Ways*, another of his books, in hardcover edition. They are worth the extra money!

Kathy Schlosser

