



TOWN OF KILL DEVIL HILLS

Land Where Flight Began

MEMORANDUM

October 16, 2019

TO: Mayor and Board of Commissioners

FROM: Debora P. Díaz, Town Manager

REF: Introductions and Presentations

1. Aaron McCall – Nags Head Woods Ecological Preserve – annual report (Attached IP-1)

Among the items Mr. McCall, Northeast Regional Steward, will discuss with the Board of Commissioners is the upcoming Nags Head Woods 40th anniversary celebration, its outreach programs, and use of the Town's partnership contribution.

NAGS HEAD WOODS PRESERVE



Photo courtesy John Towler

*2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT
TOWN OF KILL DEVIL HILLS
OCTOBER 2019*

Staff



Pictured from left: Lora Eddy, Coastal Engagement Coordinator, Jennifer Gilbreath, Conservation Coordinator, Aaron McCall, Northeast Regional Steward; Brian Boutin, Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds Director, Eric Soderholm, Albemarle-Pamlico Restoration Specialist; Photo Margaret Fields/TNC



Aaron McCall celebrated his 20th anniversary at Nags Head Woods this year.

Photo Kelly Hoeltzel

Visitor Services

- Visitor services, especially through the summer months, continue to be an important component of Nags Head Woods management. The outdoor information counter houses the visitor's registration log along with maps, guides and other literature. Indoor visitor reception is generally available during business hours. Restrooms, drinking fountain and water bottle refill services, air conditioning, a few comfortable chairs and opportunity to interact with staff are often appreciated by hikers during the hot months.
- Fortunately, the flooding issues on the Discovery and Center Trails have passed. All trails are open and remain dry – very dry.
- About 6,500 visitors signed the registration book this year. As in usual years, most states and many countries were represented. Many local groups visited throughout the year: Sea to Sounds FFES and NHES 5th Graders, Dare County Sheriff's Office Camp SALT, NC Aquarium camps, First Flight High School Track and Cross-Country teams, and The Coastal Studies Institute.

Join Us!

NAGS HEAD WOODS 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Nature Conservancy's Nags Head Woods Preserve is turning 40 this fall. There is much to celebrate, and we hope you will join us for a gathering at the preserve.

Thursday, November 14th

3 - 5 p.m.

Refreshments will be provided.

Nags Head Woods
701 West Ocean Acres Drive
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

*Parking is limited, so please carpool.
RSVP by November 7. Contact Jennifer Gilbreath at
j.gilbreath@tnc.org or (252) 441 2525, ext. 4.*

The Nature
Conservancy
North Carolina



NAGS HEAD
WOODS
PRESERVE

40
YEARS

We look forward to celebrating with Town staff and elected officials!

Outreach, Partnerships, Events

- A grant totaling \$10,726 grant was awarded by the Outer Banks Community Foundation to support development of an historical audio tour along the Roanoke Trail at Nags Head Woods Preserve. Entitled “The Land Speaks: Stories of Nags Head Woods”, the tour opened in September and connects visitors with the voices of former Nags Head Woods community residents through a cell phone. Over 700 pages of the tour have been viewed in just over two weeks.



- Eight weekly guided hikes were hosted by Nags Head Woods Preserve staff with a total participation of 82 members of the public, more than twice the attendance of 2018 hikes.



Photo Jennifer Gilbreath/TNC

- Staff gave presentations to Dare County Visitor's Bureau Staff, Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce Leadership OBX, Wings Over Water, Currituck High School AP Biology, and several visiting college groups.
- Partners and non-profit organizations used the Pavilion Building for meetings and retreats: The Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, National Park Service, Carolina Nature Photographers Association OBX Chapter, Coastal Environmental Educator's Network, Coastal Studies Institute, Jockey's Ridge State Park, and NC Wildlife Resources Commission.



Lora Eddy welcoming Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce Leadership OBX to Nags Head Woods
Photo Aaron McCall/TNC

- Staff hosted an Earth Day Event on Monday, April 22nd entitled “Falconry in the Woods” and featuring local falconer/5th grade teacher, Doug Potter.



Photo Jennifer Gilbreath/TNC



Doug Potter, with one of his Harris hawks. Photo Joyce Edwards

- Spring and fall bird hikes were hosted by NC Wildlife Resources Commission Education Division.



Fall bird hike participants enjoyed a herpetology moment.
Photo Jennifer Gilbreath/TNC

- About 50 volunteers worked over 500 hours in Nags Head Woods during fiscal year 2018-2019. Appalachian State University, local boy scouts, Coastal Studies Institute and US Coast Guard contributed to storm recovery, trail improvements, fence installation, facility cleanup, and invasive plant removal during their time with us.



Nineteen members of the Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City Chief's Mess spent a day helping to clean up the mess left by Hurricane Michael at The Nature Conservancy's Nags Head Woods Preserve. Photo Aaron McCall/TNC



Appalachian State University Alternative Spring Break Students help clear and beautify the parking area. Photo Jennifer Gilbreath/TNC

- The 36th annual Nags Head Woods 5K hosted by the North Beach Rotary Club was held at the Nags Head Woods Preserve in May. \$2,000 of race proceeds were donated for preserve-specific work.

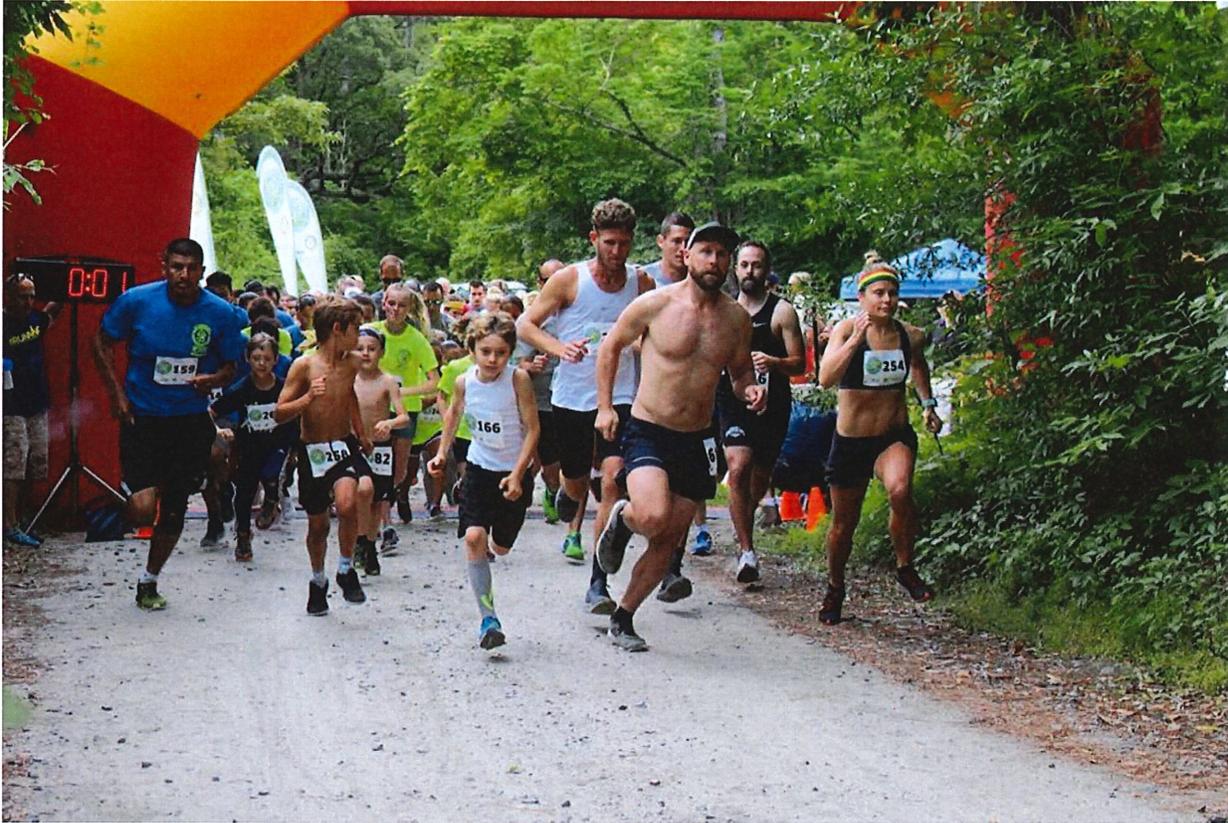


Photo OBX Running Company

- HGTV's "Beachfront Bargain Hunt" highlighted Nags Head Woods Preserve while filming on the Outer Banks. The episode aired on August 4th, 2019.



Controlled Burn

- A controlled burn was successfully conducted in partnership with the NC Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on approximately 300 acres of marsh along the southwest boundary of Nags Head Woods Preserve. Hurricanes Michael and Florence had left wrack and other plant debris in the marsh which can serve as fuel loads in the case of wildfires.



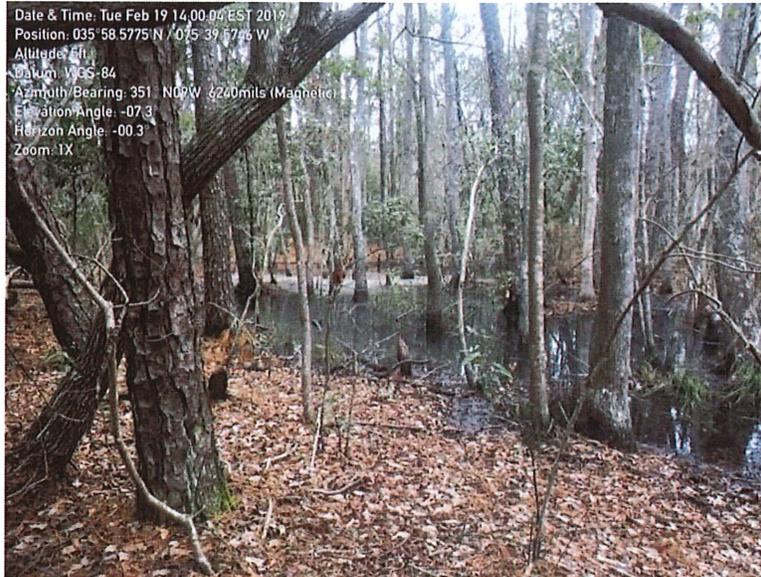
Photo Aaron McCall/TNC

Deer Management

- Since 1995 we have coordinated with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to manage the Nags Head Woods deer population through a registered bow hunt. Hunters are required to have a current North Carolina hunt permit, attend an orientation session at Nags Head Woods, complete registration forms including vehicle information, pay a \$50 fee and agree to display a registration card in their vehicle while hunting.
- The regular bow hunt season ran from September 2018 to January 1, 2019, with an extended Deer Hunt Season which closed in February 2019. A total of 40 hunters registered for the 2018-2019 season, with a total of 350 hours hunted and 2 deer harvested. Nags Head Woods Preserve manages the deer population to alleviate nutritional stress and lessen the probability of further declines in deer herd health.

Conservation, Restoration and Biology

- Invasive plant control is ongoing and likely continuous for species like Russian Olive, English Ivy and Japanese Stilt Grass. Methods include pulling, cutting, and herbicide application.
- One of the last remaining sizeable tracts within Nags Head Woods was purchased by The Nature Conservancy with significant support from an individual donor. The property was a valuable purchase in both size (10.41 acres) and in ecological significance: maritime deciduous forest, swamp forest, freshwater ponds and marsh habitat. We are exceptionally pleased to have the purchase be part of Nags Head Woods and remain undeveloped. Photo Aaron McCall/TNC



Recently purchased tract. Photo Aaron McCall/TNC

- Duke student Cameron Adams has undertaken a Master's Degree project which will identify rates of change at the marsh/forested wetland interface in Nags Head Woods. Adams is working under Dr. Dave Johnson, Associate Professor, and will use drones and remote sensing devices to collect data. This very important information will inform future management decisions as we consider erosion rates and ecological changes due to increased storm activity and sea level rise.
- Staff provided data from the Roanoke Sound to assist mapping of high salinity submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) on the coast of North Carolina. Underwater grasses, also known as SAV, are a critical nursery habitat for many aquatic creatures and help to improve water quality.



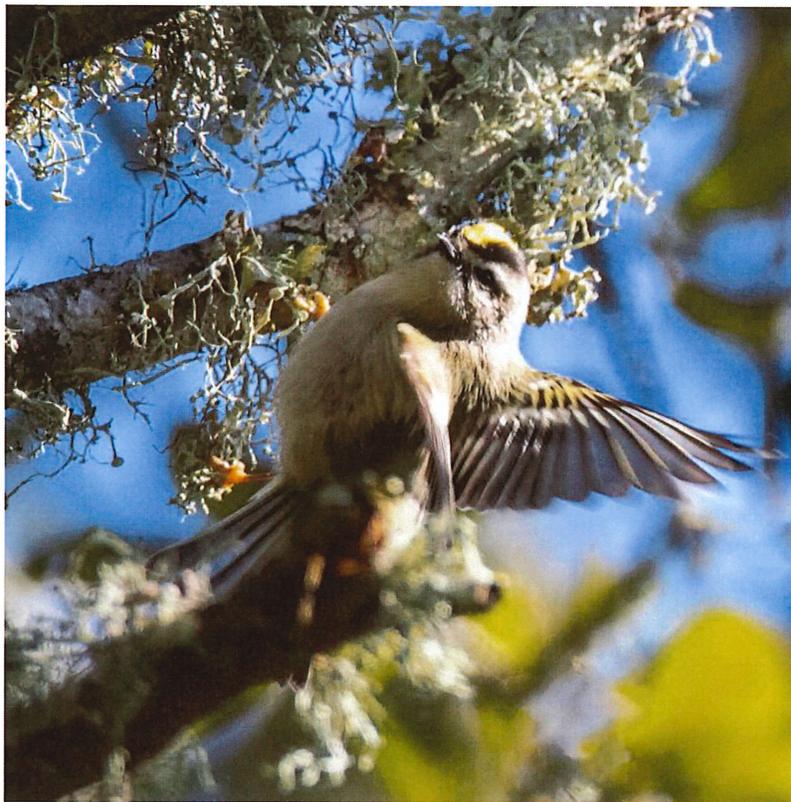
Aaron McCall and summer preserve assistant Rebekah Flick collect data for the SAV mapping project. Photo Jennifer Gilbreath/TNC

Beyond Nags Head Woods – Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds Office Projects

- A hydrology restoration project was initiated on 12,000 acres in the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The project encompasses land in Gates, Pasquotank, and Camden Counties.
- Staff completed the first year of partnership with N.C. State, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, and commercial oystermen to develop better management of oyster harvest and habitat.

- A bridge project was completed on a 7,000 acre conservation easement in Bertie County that increases habitat for struggling river herring species, reduces flooding for people and improves water quality.
- TNC's Coastal Resilience Tool's Restoration Explorer identified an oyster restoration site at Coastal Studies Institute (CSI). Based on the data from the Tool, 400 feet of oyster reef was installed to reduce shoreline erosion and protect marsh habitat. CSI will continue to monitor the site and benefits that the reef provides.

We are very grateful for the Town of Kill Devil Hills' support both this year and in past years!



Golden-crowned kinglet. Photo Martine Stolk