



# Inland Sea Chronicle

## LNWC Mission Statement

The Mission of the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists is to protect and enhance the natural resources and wildlife habitats of the Greater Lake Norman area for all to enjoy.

### Inside this issue:

Rena Bishop: 4  
Bird Champion

Erosion 5  
Helpers

LNWC 6  
Calendar



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www.LNWC.org

## Thank you, Wildlife Friends!

By **Julie Higgie**, Charter Member

**I**t all started with osprey nesting platforms, shoreline plantings...and a dream of uniting the Lake Norman community with a passion to conserve wildlife and its habitat. As the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists stands on the threshold of its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation, I feel awed by the accomplishments – and the continuing commitment – of our Officers, Board of Directors, sponsors and, of course, our committed volunteers out in the field who stand in the mud planting buttonbushes, removing litter and erecting nest boxes.

We are so fortunate that the core group of community leaders and nature-lovers who met back in 2007 to form the foundation of our North Carolina Wildlife Federation chapter, and call it Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists, was able to create such a winning formula that we have achieved instant

*(continued on page 2)*

## Fishes of Lake Norman – White Perch

By **John Crutchfield**, Director at-large

**T**he white perch is a common, warm water sport fish that has unfortunately been introduced into reservoirs of the Catawba River, including Lake Norman. The white perch is a member of the temperate bass family *Moronidae* which includes striped bass, white bass, and yellow bass. All members of this family are popular sport and food fish. There are several common names for this species which include white perch, perch, silver perch, and Waccamaw perch.



The identifying characteristics of white perch are a deep silvery body, a white belly and brownish-gray to green back, olive-green colored sides with faint lines. They have a slightly projecting lower jaw and small teeth. The tongue does not have a tooth patch unlike the striped bass and white bass. The two dorsal fins are nearly separate; the first dorsal fin has nine spines, and the second has one spine and 12 soft rays.

*(continued on page 3)*

## Thank you! (cont.)

*Working Together  
for  
Wildlife  
Conservation  
on  
Lake Norman*

**We're on the web!  
LNWC.org**



### DID YOU KNOW?

As a chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, LNWC is a non-profit organization that depends on donations. Our Tax ID is 20-8576936. Please send donations to:  
P.O. Box 4296  
Mooresville, NC  
28117

name recognition throughout the region. We work hand-in-hand with town halls, chambers, churches, schools, scouts and other groups in four counties. We achieve our goals and then raise the bar!

I think back to that long-ago communication that I, an enthusiastic Habitat Steward, received from then-NCWF Conservation Director Tim Gestwicki (now NCWF CEO), and I am so happy to have answered "yes" to attending organizational meetings. I got to work with the immensely dedicated Island Adoption Chair Jerry Barrows (now deceased) on marketing our new organization. I met new and now-cherished colleagues such as Jim Ray (first and current webmaster) and Eric Peterson (first and current conservation chair).

You can sense a theme here. We like LNWC so much that we never want to leave voluntarily!

And then there's Attorney Andrew Wingo (our first president), Architect Steve Turley (our first vice president), Bill Mugg (our first treasurer), Theresa Morr (our first organizational leader and secretary), business leader Mark Lancaster (first at-large director, later president), and many others who gave their time and talent to get us off the ground. Thank you!

This upcoming year, the LNWC Board of Directors will use our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary to both celebrate our accomplishments and accomplish even more for our region's wildlife and wild places. As always, you are welcome to join us on our mission. See you in the New Year!

## Blast from the Past!



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*LNWC organized its first Birdhouse Bonanza at the Volunteer Fire Station on Brawley School Road for area children to build their own cavity-nesting bird box. Carpenters from the Golden Boys social club created kits for the kids to put together with their mom or dad. Then everyone enjoyed snacks and a short talk about creating a Certified Wildlife Habitat at their own homes. The event was a big hit!*

## White Perch (cont.)

White perch can be confused with hybrid striped bass. Both have similar profiles and are silver in color. A white perch, however, lacks the black and often broken lateral lines of the hybrid. Anglers need to pay attention to correct identification because there are harvest restrictions on hybrid striped bass while there are no such restrictions on white perch.

White perch are found in a variety of aquatic habitats in North Carolina waters including lakes, rivers, and brackish water estuaries. The white perch is a schooling fish that inhabits the open waters of Lake Norman. Schools of white perch are often seen feeding on shad on the lake surface, especially during the summer and early fall months.

White perch may reach a maximum length of 15 inches but are more commonly found around 8 to 10 inches, weighing from 8 ounces to 1 pound. The fish has a maximum life span of about 16 years, but most fish live to 4-7 years of age in Lake Norman. The state record for white perch is 2 lbs., 15 oz. and was caught in Falls of the Neuse Reservoir during December 2001.

White perch are very prolific spawners and the females can release between 50,000 and 150,000 eggs over a period of 10 to 21 days during the spawning period of April to June. Spawning occurs at water temperatures ranging between 50 to 60 °F. As a female releases her eggs into the water, several males may hover around her to fertilize the eggs. The eggs sink and stick together in masses, or to any object on where they settle. Fry hatch in about 6 days at 52°F. White perch will migrate upstream in rivers and lakes during the spawning period and generally like flowing waters for spawning.

Young white perch feed on zooplankton (small crustaceans) and other aquatic insects. Larger juvenile and adult fish feed almost exclusively on fish, especially shad. White perch have also been known to eat the eggs of many fish species including walleye, white bass and other white perch. They can also hybridize with white bass. In many cases, white bass populations have significantly declined and even disappeared with the introduction and subsequent competition of white perch. Their prolific spawning often results in overpopulation and stunting of the species



*White perch are commonly found in large schools as this depth finder reading shows and in numbers ranging from dozens to easily in the hundreds. The amount of food this exotic species consumes can and does have detrimental impacts on native fish (Photo courtesy of Gene Vaughan).*

especially in smaller impoundments.

The white perch is a good sport fish on light tackle and is usually caught on live minnows, small jigs, spoons, spinners, and top-water lures. Their aggressive nature and schooling tendency make them one of the easiest fish to catch. Schools of feeding white perch are often visually located on the lake surface or detected with a fish finder suspended at lake mid-depths in open water. Larger fish can usually be caught in late winter to early spring prior to spawning.

White perch are a good food fish with delicate flavored flesh and can be broiled, baked or fried depending upon your preference.



# A Champion of Bluebirds

**O**n December 8, a 4 PM dedication was held at the Mooresville Golf Course honoring Mrs. Rena Bishop. Rena is a long-time resident of Mooresville with a huge heart and sincere desire to enhance the population of bluebirds in the area. By all accounts Rena was the first person to create, maintain, and monitor an ongoing bluebird trail on the Mooresville Golf Course; having initiated such efforts in the late 1960's.

The golf course has changed a great deal over time, most recently with a major renovation, and the effort to restore the bluebird trail on the property was a subject of great interest to several environmental organizations. A cooperative undertaking involving local Girl Scout Troop 10302 and their leaders who constructed the 22 bluebird boxes, the Bishop and Rocklein families who financially supported and labored in promoting the idea before it was even a project, Lowe's Companies Inc. provided funding for the wood and hardware for the boxes, a very cooperative Golf Course staff encouraged and facilitated the project, and the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists assisted in siting the boxes and agreed to do the seasonal monitoring and data collection of the boxes beginning in the Spring of 2017.

It seemed fitting that a newly-renovated golf course should have a brand new bluebird trail and although the temperature was a little chilly and the wind was blowing, the Rena Bishop Bluebird Trail was formally dedicated. Being the person she is, and has always been, Rena expressed her appreciation to all the people in attendance. It was the people there though who really knew who deserved the accolades. As we were adjourning, 3 bluebirds landed on the grassy hillside adjacent to the new sign as if to say, "Thanks Rena for all you do for us."

—**Gene Vaughan**, Director at-large



*Rena Bishop beside the sign dedicating the Mooresville Golf Course Bluebird Trail in her name.*



# Controlling Erosion Around LKN Islands

**B**uttonbush is a warm-season shrub/small tree that can reach 10-ft in height and is found in swamps, floodplains, marshes, and on the shorelines of lakes and streams. Although they are a wetland plant species they can tolerate both high water levels as well as periodic dry/drought conditions. The flowers which appear from June-September have a pincushion appearance and the fruit which looks like small balls appears in September-October.



Although buttonbush is indeed a beautiful plant, the primary reason 250 3-gal containers of plants were planted on Nov. 5 around selected large islands in Lake Norman was because they are excellent in controlling shoreline erosion. It is one of the few native aquatic plants that forms dense stands and with its swollen base stabilizes the plant in what is a very inhospitable environment with a continual scouring wave action.

In addition to erosion control, waterfowl and shorebirds feed on the seeds of buttonbush. White-tailed deer browse on the leaves and stems and young wood ducks and larval fish use the plant's tendency to form dense stands as cover. Another positive environmental benefit of planting buttonbush is that pollinators like butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds feed on the nectar in the flowers.

It is wonderful to talk about all the benefits buttonbush provides and the fauna that is benefited by its presence, but as the team of nearly 30 members and volunteers of the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists quickly discovered, buttonbush does not plant itself. Because of the drought this year the lake was 5-6 ft. below full pond so the shoreline where lake levels had been in the past, were in many places now hardpan and bone dry. The task of digging 250 holes quickly lost its appeal, if it ever really had any, when the shoveling out of holes for the buttonbush plants quickly reminded many of the participants of their carpal tunnel syndrome and rotator cuff impairments...

In what we envisioned as likely being a two-day job, by mid-afternoon all the buttonbush had been planted!!! A HUGE thank you to all who participated and we will definitely keep you informed as to the planting success of the buttonbush as it begins to produce leaves this spring.

—Gene Vaughan and John Crutchfield



*Supplementing existing buttonbush colonies with new plantings increases shoreline protection.*

# LNWC Calendar

- 6 p.m. Jan. 9 **BOD Meeting**, Keller Williams Realty Office, Bluefield Road, Mooresville
- 7 p.m. Jan. 12 **Nature Program**, Mooresville Public Library, Dr. Larry Mellichamp, Native Plants
- 6 p.m. Feb. 6 **BOD Meeting**, Keller Williams Realty Office, Bluefield Road, Mooresville
- 7 p.m. Feb. 9 **Nature Program**, Mooresville Public Library, Ranger Amy Shepherd, LKN Park
- 6 p.m. March 6 **BOD Meeting**, Keller Williams Realty Office, Bluefield Road, Mooresville
- 7 p.m. March 9 **Nature Program**, Mooresville Public Library, Raptor Center\*

\*April Program: Biologist Scott Fletcher; May Program: Capt. Gus Gustafson

## Thank You to Our Major Sponsors!



## Chapter Leaders

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**Billy Wilson**, President  
**Sid Smith**, Vice President  
**Don West**, Treasurer  
**Julie Higgin**, Secretary

Directors at-large:

**Ken Conrad**  
**Eric Peterson**  
**Jim Ray**  
**Kristen Meng**  
**Don Higgin**  
**Gene Vaughan**  
**Volkmar Dirksen**  
**John Crutchfield**



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Contact Julie Higgin, editor, at [jchiggin@yahoo.com](mailto:jchiggin@yahoo.com)