

The Shoreline

Vol. 12, No. 12

A Shoreline Community, Pine Knoll Shores, N.C.

December 2017

Cape Lookout Raptor Research Project

By Steve Felch

I was sure I saw the distinct peregrine flight profile as it popped over the dune 800 yards out, so I launched my tethered pigeon lure into the air. Almost immediately the distant raptor turned in my direction and dropped down into a stealth stoop (the downward swoop of a bird of prey), hugging the rolling dunes and came barreling in. In typical falcon fashion, it buzzed right over the lure and swung back for another stoop. By now I recognized it as a male peregrine by its smaller size, and switched to a starling lure centered in a triangle setup of three mist nets. The peregrine instantly switched its focus and stooped into the mist net, which is designed to catch birds effectively and without any harm. Out of the blind I went and soon I had a juvenile male peregrine in hand. After taking some

measurements, what we call morphometric data (weight and wing chord, which is the length from the "elbow" of the wing to the tip); I affixed a US Geological Survey (USGS) Bird Banding Lab-issued leg band and, after a quick picture, I set the raptor free to continue his journey south.

After 38 years of catching and banding raptors during the fall migration at Cape May, New Jersey, I am still jazzed when I hold a raptor in the hand. Prior to retiring from the US Department of the Interior in Washington, DC, where I worked on a variety of natural resource,



Steve Felch in front of the Cape Lookout bird blind.—Photo by Mr. Felch

Standard
Pre-Sort
Permit #35
Atlantic Beach, NC 28512

THE Shoreline

Face Behind the
Badge Event

See page 19

Turtle Season

Wrap-Up

See page 22

Pine Knoll Shores Election 2017

Winners in Bold Type

Mayor

Ken Jones (incumbent): 279 votes

John Ferguson: 220 votes

Commissioners (3)

John Brodman (incumbent): 280 votes

Bill Knecht: 261 votes

Larry Corsello (incumbent): 242 votes*

Alicia Durham: 242 votes

Fred Fulcher (incumbent): 182 votes

Shannon Smylie: 125 votes

Write-In (miscellaneous): 5 votes

Special appreciation is extended to outgoing

Commissioner Fred Fulcher for his service to the community.

**At the conclusion of a recount of the Pine Knoll Shores votes on November 27, there was still a tie in the commissioner race between Larry Corsello and Alicia Durham. Pursuant to NC General Statute 163-292(3), the winner was determined by the Board of Elections (BOE) by lot. In this case, the method used by BOE was a draw of the winning name.*

reforestation, migratory bird issues, and moving to Pine Knoll Shores, I called the Cape Lookout National Seashore superintendent and proposed a long-term research project monitoring the status, trends and level of migrating raptors along the Cape Lookout National Seashore. Shortly thereafter, the Cape Lookout Raptor Research Project was set up with the full blessing and support of the National Park Service (NPS).

Actually, there is much more involved, in a regulatory sense, than a simple phone call in order to capture and band raptors. I have a master banding permit from the USGS Bird Banding Lab, a North Carolina Wildlife Collection license and a National Park Service Scientific Research permit that satisfy the legalities and the administrative requirements.

The real work involves building a blind and setting up multiple spring-operated bow nets designed to "throw" themselves over a raptor by pulling a release line; Dho Gazza nets, which collapse around the raptor (falcons like to grab their prey and fly off, sort of like a drive through, and this type of net collapses around the raptor as it stoops in); and a series of mist nets that contain loose, baggy pockets to capture the raptor as it flies in to grab the lure, arranged in a triangle shape to ensure coverage from all sides.

(Continued on page 6)