

COASTAL MASTER NATURALIST ASSOCIATION NEWS

December 2011

Many thanks to the people who have agreed to serve as officers of CMNA for 2012.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

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CMNA SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2012

President - Gene Mauldin (Fall 2010)

VP Program Chair - Brenda Hockensmith (Spring 2010)

Membership Chair – Kris Wheeler (Spring 2008)

Secretary -

Treasurer - Elise Wallace (Saturday class 2010)

Board Members at Large:

Judith Kramer (Spring 2008)

Two vacant seats

REMINDERS

2012 Dues

Coastal Master Naturalist Association members, now is the time to renew your membership for 2012. Visit our website at [Coastal Master Naturalists](http://www.coastalmasternaturalists.com) and click on "registration form" to print out the membership form. Send the form and your check for \$15 to the address on the form.

Report Your Hours for 2011

Also, don't forget to update your Master Naturalist volunteer hours and advance education hours for this year if you have not already done so. The records are kept on a calendar year basis, so be sure to report your hours through Dec. 31. You can access the reporting form here:

<http://www.clemson.edu/public/naturalist/volunteering.html>

Look for the link to "Download Volunteer Tracker Form."

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

How Can We Make a Difference?

by Ann Truesdale

Fellow Master Naturalists, this is the last newsletter I will send to you since my term as CMNA Membership Chair is over. I have some parting thoughts on what I think is an important role for the Master Naturalist Course and Master Naturalists.

As a native South Carolinian who grew up "in the country" on a farm, I learned to appreciate the natural world and to love all the natural beauty that South Carolina has to offer. I always knew that we were blessed with great natural diversity in this small state, having visited different areas of the state from the beaches to the mountains, as a child. But only by taking the Master Naturalist course did I become familiar with our swamps, longleaf pine forests and many other ecosystems. As a native plant enthusiast and orchid grower, I was delighted to learn that over fifty-five orchid species grow in our state. My birding friends talk about how a good day birding yielded 15 species in other areas where they have lived; here a day trip to Donnelley WMA and Bear Island WMA can yield 75 species. This diversity is one of our state's treasures. It is one reason so many people want to live here. Unfortunately, population growth, development, and poor land management threatens to degrade the very environment people come here to enjoy.

As Master Naturalists, we have learned a great deal about how the ecosystem works, however many people have little or no understanding of how humans impact the environment. And no understanding of how humans *depend* upon the environment. The latest issue of SCDNR's *South Carolina Wildlife* magazine has two articles touching on this human – natural environment interaction. "Coastal Plains Wetlands 101" lists various types of wetlands and says, "These areas are essential to human habitation, serving as sponges and filters that soak up runoff during heavy rainfalls, trapping silt and pollutants, and gradually releasing the filtered water back into the streams and underground aquifers from which we draw our drinking water. Wetlands are critical for wildlife as well" Yet, I suspect a large proportion of the public regards wetlands and swamps as "useless" and "wasted" land. I read that article and wished that its message could reach every person in South Carolina.

The second article, "Roundtable: Many Animal Species Benefit from Snags," explains that cavities in dead trees are used by 85 bird species. Cavities are also used by mammals such as squirrels and raccoons, by frogs, snakes, honeybees, wasps, spiders, and aquatic invertebrates. "The value of snags to both wildlife and people is countless, . . . many snag-dependent species control insects and pests, and birds of prey prefer the vantage point snags afford for hunting rodents." And yet, how many property owners "clean up" their land by removing "unsightly" dead trees?

We as Master Naturalists have the knowledge to educate our friends and neighbors about these sorts of topics when the opportunity arises. It does not have to be a heavy-

handed lecture. I took the first chance I found to say something to my neighbor about his "Pileated Woodpecker condo," knowing that he notices and likes the woodpeckers – and that he tends to clean up stuff that is good wildlife habitat. The "condo" was an isolated dead pine tree that I feared he would "neaten up" if its benefits were not pointed out.

So, fellow Master Naturalists, go out there and enlighten the public one person at a time. Or, if you get the chance to talk to twenty people, that's even better!