

CURRENTS

2005
Winter 2004

Volume 2, issue 4

NC BIG SWEEP RECOGNIZES DRBA MEMBERS

The nineteenth annual North Carolina Big Sweep was scheduled for October 2 this year, but the extra-active hurricane season changed many well-laid plans across the state. Several counties were unable to hold their cleanup of waterways, highways, and byways, and many had greatly reduced numbers of volunteers and amounts of debris recovered.

In the Dan River basin, however, 1578 volunteers in Caswell, Person, Rockingham, and Stokes Counties cleaned up over 186 miles of rivers, streams, lakes, and roadways, removing nearly 68,500 pounds of trash. As part of the International Coastal Cleanup, participants tallied certain types of debris for a collective report to be used in antilitter education.

DRBA's Education Chair, Forrest Altman, served as Caswell County Coordinator for 2004, returning to that position after several years as a team volunteer. For the eighth consecutive year T Butler coordinated the cleanup in Rockingham County where DRBA members led 13 of the county's 52 teams of volunteers in cleaning up roadsides, trails, and the Dan, Smith, and Mayo Rivers.

At the North Carolina Big Sweep Thanksgiving Celebration on November 16, a special certificate recognized DRBA member Milton Hundley, who led members of DRBA and the Rockingham County Naturalist Club in cleaning an unnamed branch of Jacob's Creek, a tributary of the Dan River.

"Milton's eleven volunteers pulled out 8,340 pounds of debris, including furniture, appliances, and 220 tires, most



including their rims," stated T Butler. "He was such an inspiration that many of us spent the entire day at that site, and we loved seeing what a difference we could make. We could never have done it without Milton."

Also at the November 16 meeting, each county coordinator received certificates of appreciation from Governor Easley and from NC Big Sweep for their service to the state. T Butler received the 2004 Caroline Parker Outstanding Achievement Award for her service as a board member and county coordinator for NC Big Sweep.

By T Butler

DRBA OFFICERS HONORED

At their November 8 meeting, the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners honored T and Lindley Butler for "their lifelong dedication to researching and preserving the history of our county and conserving and protecting the heritage of our environment." Among the activities cited was their devotion to conservation and preserving the environment, which "led them to participate in the creation and organization of the Dan River Basin Association, a group that is dedicated to the preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Rockingham County's rivers."

In addition, "their leadership in the Dan River Basin Association fostered their involvement with the Mayo State Park Committee, which Dr. Butler chairs," as well as their "many hours working with the Tourism Development Authority to promote and market Rockingham County's rivers for outdoor recreation and tourism."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1st Saturday Outings	2
New Batteau Committee	3
Mike Covey Honored	
Photo Gallery	
Highlights of 2004	4
South Boston Exhibit	
Hwy 87 Bridge	
October Minutes Excerpts	5
More on Mistletoe	
Up-coming 1st Saturday Outings	6

FIRST SATURDAY OUTING November 6, 2004

What's wrong with this old trail song as a description of the November First Saturday Outing?

*Swingin' along the open road
Under skies that are clear;
Swingin' along the open road
In the fall of the year. . .*

Answer: nothing at all unless you're a nit-picking history buff.

Fact is, for part of the pleasant 2.5-mile hike on a future Eden greenway, we followed a broad road right-of-way "dedicated" but never "OPENED." For another part, we tramped a broad sewer easement. The rest of the time, we followed the Smith River for at least a mile: a very pleasant hike rustling along on dried and fallen leaves under tall sycamore, river birch and beech trees.

The proposed greenway starts behind the Eden Y. M. C. A. and emerges from the Smith valley just below the dam at Spray, near the office of the Eden Rescue Squad.

Under the tutelage of our naturalist and historian participants, we

made stops to study a torpid snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), an old culvert of the "dedicated" road never built, seven Canada geese (*Branta Canadensis*) on a small island in the Smith River and the site of an old ford and bridge.

Representing *Homo sapiens sapiens* were Forrest Altman, Lucy Berry, Mark Bishopic (Leader), Lindley and T Butler, Robert Carter Jr., Milton Hundley, Dan and Ruth Leeper, Tony Lovell and granddaughter Nicole, Mildred Mann, Ann Parker, Hazel Puckett, Julia Pyron and daughter Ashley and Mike Vaughan. Representatives of *Canis familiaris*, squired for much of the walk by Ashley and Nicole, were Caber and Barra Butler and Mac Vaughan.

Big Sweep Champion T Butler set an example of trail grooming, assisted by others until all the little trash bags were filled.

Trip leader Captain Mark offered some participants a bonus for good behavior: a ride on the Basin Association's batteau [sic] (note the antiquarian spelling, preferred by Bill Trout, author of the Dan River Atlas). For this lengthy trip along at least fifty yards of the historic Spray canal off the Smith River, Cap'n Mark was ably assisted by apprentice Able Helmsman Milton Hundley.

By Forrest Altman

FIRST SATURDAY *Sprig Outing Report December 4, 2004*

Upper Little River, Cape Fear Tributary Near Lillington, Harnett County, NC

Why do we have trip reports?

I suppose to let you non-attenders know what you missed.

In order to do that for the December First Saturday Outing, we'll need to write an unconventional report in four parts:

Part One: Geography / Sociology: December being the time of Hanukkah, the Winter solstice, Christmas and the New Year, it becomes a time of, among other things, decorating with festive greenery. What stays green and festive in this season? Mistletoe, holly and conifers. Where are the first two of these found growing profusely? Along Southern swamp rivers.

Part Two: History: Trip leader Altman discovered this fact in the 1970's (for details see his book *26 Wilderness Adventures: Afoot and Afloat*, Star Square Press, 1999, "Trip Three-Afloat Lumber River Serendipity.") In the 1980's, as chair of the Headwaters Group of the Sierra Club in Durham, he initiated the Sprig Outing. Annual Sprig Outings have continued. The 2004 First Saturday Outing was Altman's 20th Annual mistletoe-seeking adventure. Some of this year's participants have made it a regular part of their seasonal celebration year after year. Participants were drawn mostly from the ranks of the Carolina Canoe Club and the Lumber River Canoe Club.

Anthropology: Since three of the "adventures" Altman recounts in his book deal with mistletoe, he includes in the Appendix to the book selections from Sir James George Frazer's anthropological work *The Golden Bough*. The "golden bough" is mistletoe. Why is perennially green mistletoe called golden? Look at these quotations from *The Golden Bough*.

.....Breton peasants hung up great branches of mistletoe in front of their cottages, and in the month of June these branches were conspicuous for the bright golden tinge of their foliage.

.....At York, in the eighteenth century, mistletoe was carried to the

high altar of the Cathedral and a public amnesty and "universal liberty" was proclaimed. . . The traditional privilege of kissing any woman found under mistletoe is a relic of the same thing.

.....Altman, observing the annual hanging of mistletoe over his front door as a symbol of liberty and forgiveness, finds at each solstice that last year's sprig has become a GOLDEN BOUGH both literally and symbolically. What can be more golden than forgiveness and liberty?

Bare Facts: Fifteen persons and two dogs (Conan and Toast) from six North Carolina counties met at Hardee's in Lillington, drove seven vehicles to the Johnson farm on Joel Johnson Road and launched nine boats on the Upper Little River. Three boats carried long poles for grappling high sprigs. Paddling upstream on quiet water, boaters "thwarted" and grappled in the manner described in Altman's book. Each participant carried home a wealth of sprigs. Two boats garnered holly boughs, one from an unfamiliar species (there are dozens of species of American holly. American mistletoe tends to be *Phoradendron flavescens*.)

Before leaving the farm we stopped to visit briefly with Rose Johnson, whose husband Joel was buried the previous Saturday. We presented her a huge wreath of juniper and holly, a handsome bough of mistletoe and a card of condolence signed by all of us. We have been invited to return next Winter Solstice.

Trip Highlights: For Sue and Larry Yarger, seeing grandson Evan Diener try out the grappling pole he'd made himself the night before.

For repeat participant Rod Rich, garnering the biggest mistletoe clump he's ever seen.

For the trip leader, the pleasure of seeing a congenial group of boaters cooperating, conserving, bagging river trash as well as mistletoe and sharing the sprigs (not the trash).

That's some of what you missed.

By Forrest Altman

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

At its meeting at Danville Water Plant Wednesday afternoon, October 13, the DRBA Board of Directors took two related actions.

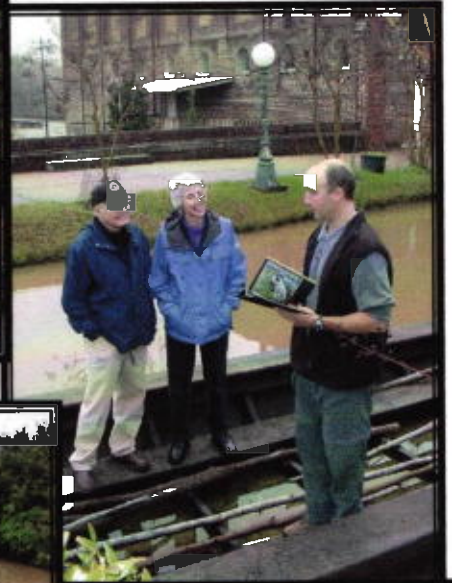
In view of Mike Covey's resignation from the leadership of DRBA and his plans to leave the area, the Board passed a resolution thanking Mike Covey for all of his many valuable volunteer efforts in behalf of the Association, among them his outstanding work as chair of the Batteau Committee.

The Board also appointed a new Batteau Committee.

Many of us know of Mike's hard work in recruiting a crew of workers to flip the 2000-pound batteau (twice!), caulk it with oakum ordered from the state of Maine, paint it and float it to a temporary winter home in Eden's historic Spray Canal. Who will take up the work and make decisions about the batteau?

At the meeting Forrest Altman, Jeff Johnston and Terry Painter were appointed by President Tom Edmonds to begin planning for the batteau's future. Specifically, the committee was asked to (1) consider providing a vehicle to pull the batteau's trailer, which Terry has been building at his home in Roxboro and (2) open discussion about its ownership and use. These discussions are getting started.

In the meantime, a couple of things need to happen. First, the many generous and stalwart persons Mike has recruited to repair and float the batteau need to be reassured that the batteau project will not go leaderless with Mike's departure but will pass, at least initially, to Jeff, Terry and Forrest, who will be grateful for their continuing help. *By Forrest Altman*



Mike Covey receives the resolution and a photo book on the Batteau Dan River's transformation from DRBA officers Lindley and T Butler.

PHOTO GALLERY



Participants of the November 6th outing were treated to a ride on the Batteau Dan River. In true batteau fashion passengers were poled along the Spray canal by Captain Mark Bishopric and Helmsman Milton Hundley.



One of four display units used at the South Boston Museum
Exhibit on
"Follow The Dan"



Grappling for mistletoe on the Upper Little River near Lillington, NC

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2004

Three of DRBA's major projects have reached significant milestones during 2004. At the general meeting in May, our planning consultant William Butler presented the master plan for the new Mayo River State Park, for which North Carolina has now purchased over 800 acres, including the old Mayo Park and Fall Creek Falls. Over three dozen DRBA volunteers worked this year on our batteau, the *Dan River*, which is now floating in the historic Spray canal in Eden. Thanks to a grant from Progress Energy, the South Boston Museum currently has an exhibit on the Dan River, a joint project with DRBA, which includes some spectacular photos of the basin.

In addition, we continue to hold our popular First Saturday outings year-round, including hikes, paddle trips, and Big Sweep cleanup events. Cooperating with the Rockingham County Tourism Develop-

ment Authority, we have persuaded NCDOT to erect river access signs and river identification signs in the county. Three Board members attended the National River Rally in May, and two attended the Citizen Environmental Monitoring Summit in November in preparation for a water quality monitoring program for the basin.

Rockingham County Spring Clean awarded DRBA a cash prize for our cleanup of over 24,000 pounds of trash, and the Rockingham County Naturalist Club jointly purchased a PowerPoint projector with us. DRBA granted \$1500 to Eden for its Riverfest and had a booth there and at the Dan River Boat Race and Stokes Stomp.

A detailed annual report will be posted on the website, www.danriver.org.

By T Butler

South Boston Exhibit Dan River Navigation

From September through November, The Halifax County – South Boston Museum of Fine Arts and History hosted an exhibition called "Follow the Dan," a cooperative project drawing on the resources of DRBA and the Virginia Museum of Natural History as well as the local museum. DRBA contributed a photographic exhibition created by Steve Carpenter, including several dozen photographs from throughout the basin mounted on four folding screens. These emphasize the natural beauty of the river and are the permanent property of DRBA, available for transfer to other sites in the basin; the next venue will be City Hall in Eden. Progress Energy provided a grant for the construction of this portion of the exhibition.

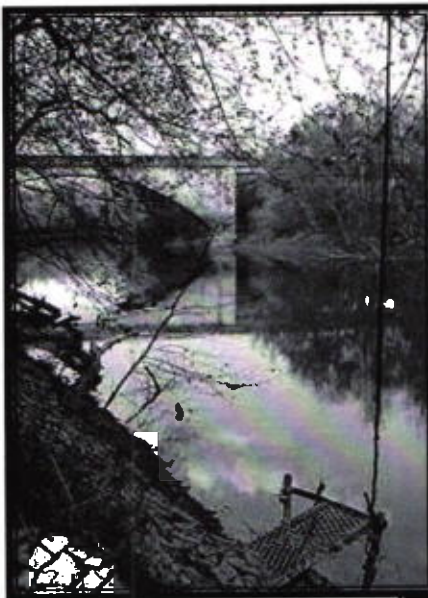
The Virginia Museum of Natural History lent free of charge an interactive science education exhibit called "This is Our Watershed." It consists of a watershed model with flowing water, an introductory

panel, another panel with a lighted map of the river, and two panels with interactive features. DRBA members Barry Dunkley and Paul Johnson transported the Watershed exhibit from its previous location in Blacksburg.

The Halifax County – South Boston Museum of Fine Arts and History completed the exhibition with photographic and information panels on the counties of the basin, as well as items from the permanent collection illustrating industries in the basin and Appalachian folk life. On November 18, the Museum hosted a DRBA-sponsored lecture by Dr. Lindley Butler on the history of the Dan, attended by members from counties throughout the basin as well as by interested members of the Museum.

By Paul Johnson

Hwy 87 / S Hamilton Street Bridge



A crane stands poised on the banks of the Dan River, not the graceful white winged and jet tipped Whooping Crane *grus americana*, but one of hardened steel and noisy mechanics. This crane sets in readiness to forever remove from our view the graceful arch of the Hwy 87/South Hamilton Street Bridge. This familiar site has spanned the Dan River since 1922. Now at the end of useful existence it is now prepared for demolition. Efforts to save this landmark failed.

DRBA however continues our support for the preservation of two other historic Dan River Bridges: Worsbam Street Bridge in Danville, VA and Fishing Creek (Mebane) Bridge in Eden, NC.



On a future evening, with lunar luminescence bright enough to read by, you may still see the adventurous, the romantic, the curious in their canoes enjoying the picture perfect view of a rising moon pouring its light on white paper birches, and rippling waters, but alas...not on this lovely arch.

EXCERPTS FROM THE OCTOBER 13 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Grants Committee: Tom Taylor sent a message that the Clean Water Management Trust Fund did not approve our grant application for purchase of the Whitt farm on the Dan River near Eden. Lindley Butler reported that the landowner's asking price was too high. Tom Edmonds stated that the committee did not pursue the Golden Leaf grant discussed at the last meeting.

Other grants that the Board approved pursuing are as follows:

- 1) Annie Penn Community Trust grant for brochure to publicize the Chinqua-Penn Trail in Rockingham County (Grants Committee)
- 2) Rockingham County Tourism Development Authority grant for brochure on Dan River batteau navigation system in the county (Lindley Butler)—DRBA's name to be on the brochure
- 3) Virginia DEQ grant for water quality monitoring for next year (Brenda Martin and Ken Bridle)

Streamwatch Monitoring: The Board discussed the distinctions between water quality monitoring, such as measurements the state water quality agencies take, and streamwatch activities appropriate for trained volunteers. It was agreed that adequate training for nonprofessionals is essential for the reliability of data collected.

Ken Bridle brought information about the Citizen Environmental Monitoring Summit scheduled for Nov. 4 – 6 in Bristol, VA. The Board approved a \$250 scholarship each for Ken Bridle and Brenda Martin to use to attend the conference.

For the 2005 DRBA annual meeting, Ken, Brenda, and Mike Vaughan agreed to participate in a panel discussion on what is being done in both states and how DRBA can participate in ensuring that our basin's water quality is good. Forrest may explore asking a volunteer from another river organization to participate on the program.

Brenda suggested that DRBA hold workshops to certify volunteers and teachers. She and Ken agreed to coordinate our streamwatch program, which we hope will attract new members as it involves more people and provides a valuable service in both states.

Website: The Board agreed to seek professional help with designing our website to make it more appealing and interactive. Wayne Kirkpatrick's son is to contact Tom Edmonds to discuss the possibilities.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 12, 2005 at the Danville Water Treatment Plant.

Want To Know More About Mistletoe? By Forrest Altman

*Selections from The New Golden Bough. Abridged from Sir James George Frazer's Classic Work by Theodor H. Gaster
New American Library, 1964. Quoted in Appendix to 26 Wilderness Adventures: Afoot and Afloat*

- Ø From time immemorial the mistletoe has been an object of superstitious veneration in Europe.
- Ø Mistletoe struck and killed the Norse god Balder, whose life was between heaven and earth.
- Ø Balder was identified with the oak, and mistletoe was regarded as "the seat of life of the oak"; so long as the mistletoe is intact nothing can happen to the oak. "The conception of the mistletoe as the seat of life in the oak would naturally be suggested to primitive people by the observation that while the oak is deciduous, the mistletoe which grows on it is evergreen. In winter the sight of its fresh foliage among the bare branches must have been hailed by worshippers as a sign that the divine life had ceased to animate the branches yet survived in the mistletoe, as the heart of a sleeper beats when his body is motionless."
- Ø "The mistletoe owes its mystic character to its not growing on the ground."
- Ø A popular superstition held that "at certain times the mistletoe blazed out into a supernatural glow."
- Ø Mistletoe is gathered either at midsummer or Christmas—that is, at the summer or winter solstice—and it is supposed to possess the power of revealing treasures in the earth. Thus in Sweden it is used in divining rods.
 - Ø Gathered without its touching the ground, it was regarded as a particularly powerful medicine.
 - Ø In Austria, a sprig of mistletoe . . . laid on the threshold is thought to prevent nightmares.
 - Ø The Druids cut mistletoe with a golden sickle; to cut it with iron would destroy its efficacy
 - Ø In Sweden it is still kept in houses as a safeguard against conflagration.
 - Ø In Sweden mistletoe is efficacious against mischievous trolls.
 - Ø In the north of England you can cause your dairy herd to succeed if you give a touch of mistletoe to the first cow that calves after New Year's Day.
 - Ø In the Swiss Tyrol, mistletoe is believed to be able, "under certain conditions" (unspecified) to open all locks.



Dan River Basin Association

The Dan River Basin Association
PO Box 103
Wentworth, NC 27375

Phone: 336-342-1415
E-mail: members@danriver.org

*To preserve
the Natural
and
Cultural Resources
of the
Dan River Basin
by promoting
Stewardship,
Recreation
and
Education*

Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current; no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by and another takes its place, and this too will be swept away.

--Marcus Aurelius, Meditations (121-180)

Editor:

Dorcas Midkiff

Associate Editor

T Butler

Contributing Writers:

Forrest Altman

T Butler

Paul Johnson

Photography:

Dorcas Midkiff

Julia Pyron

T Butler

First Saturday Outings January thru April 2005

Jan. 8 (NOT Jan 1): Hike Ringgold-Sutherlin Rail Trail.

Contact: *Steve Carpenter* 336-597-1720 scarpenter@personcounty.net

Feb. 5: Revisit Snow Creek Stream Restoration Project

Contact *Ken Bridle* 336-591-5882 bridle@mindspring.com

Mar. 5: Hike Fairy Stone State Park

Contact: *Joey Bane* 434-572-4891 jbane@gcronline.com

Apr. 2: Hike Rock Castle Creek Gorge

Contact: *Will Truslow* 336-547-1903 willtruslow@hotmail.com

Come Join Us

DAN RIVER BASIN



ASSOCIATION