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Cape Hattres NS

Fax:252-473-2595

Nov 16 '05 16:38 P.03

RECEIVED

NOV 16 2005

Outer Banks Group

Nov 16, 2005

National Park Service Superintendent Pat Reed  
1401 National Park Drive  
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear National Park Service Superintendent Reed,

I have long loved the wild beauty of Cape Hatteras and consider it one of our country's treasures. Please don't let unregulated ORV use in the National Seashore destroy or diminish it for future generations.

Think of future generations. Please.

Sincerely,

Emily d'Aulaire  
21 Sunset Hill Rd  
Redding, CT 06896-1709

0019675

Cape Hattres NS

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P.02

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Nov 14, 2005

National Park Service Superintendent Larry Belli  
1401 National Park Drive  
Manteo, NC 27954

Dear National Park Service Superintendent Belli,

As a supporter of Defenders of Wildlife, I am writing today to because I just returned from Ocracoke and Hatteras. It was my first time to the Outer banks. I have read about it and was so excited to finally see it this October. I brought fishing gear and my wife and I walked the beach for miles. I fly fished in the surf and also surf casted for the first time. The beauty and the marine life and birds were wonderful. I have been to Cape Cod National Seashore several times and I was surprised about the amount of 4WD vehicles were allowed on the beach in many sections. It was definitely noisy, ugly and more importantly does not belong in an area that has nesting birds and turtles. I am 57 and was able to walk miles and walk with my fishing gear and seeing scores of fisherman just drive up and park was unnecessary. Please make this a walk in only or only area.  
Sincerely, Erik Staub

Sincerely,

Erik Staub  
3007 Grand View Dr  
Greeley, CO 80631-9427

**COMMENTS FOR THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS  
MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED SPECIES**

Patricia J. Moore, resident of Frisco, NC, serious birder, ORV user of the beach

My husband and I built a house on Hatteras Island and retired here in March 1991 after 25 years of vacationing on the Outer Banks. We first came here in the mid 1960's so that Neal could fish and I could watch birds. Our initial trips found us totally new to using a 4x4 in the sand and to understanding the dynamics of the seashore and the wildlife that resided here.

As I recall, in those early days the National Park Service seemed to have few restrictions about driving over the ramps and through the dunes to the beach. I was not sensitive to what other drivers were doing (there were not so many during those earlier days) and not really sensitive to the needs of the birds that I had come there to observe. All the birds were new to me: gulls, terns, pelagics, shorebirds, colonial nesters. Because there were few restrictions to where I could drive, I vividly remember seeing my first Piping Plovers on the flats in the Salt Pond area --- a family with the parents piping to chicks --- right outside the windows of my car. It horrifies me to think of it! I wonder even now if those chicks survived being in a place where there were no rules about driving? Would there be more plovers today if the NPS had realized that restrictions needed to be in place long before now?

We can't do much about that which has gone by. During the intervening years Neal and I have become serious birders, having learned to identify most species that frequent the National Seashore. We honed our skills during the nesting season of 2005 by spending some 60 hours monitoring the chicks of Piping Plover and American Oystercatcher in the areas of Cape Point and the beach toward Frisco.

In the first few years that we lived here I can recall that the area south of the last dunes and the Salt Pond, as one goes toward the Point, was a prime nesting area for Common Tern, Least Tern, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer, and even an unusual Sooty Tern. There would be some spotty sightings of Piping Plovers in that area or on the beach toward Frisco.

There were hundreds of terns, fewer Skimmers and Oystercatcher, but nevertheless seemingly healthy populations of all. It was a pleasure to drive there and observe from a respectful distance behind the closure the various species with their chicks. Then suddenly the birds stopped nesting in the Point area. In fact we birders were hard put to find any of them on Hatteras or Ocracoke. It might have been due to storms that overwashed the nesting area and wiped out eggs and chicks. It might have been due to lack of protection during nesting or during the stopover times when the birds needed to rest and forage. This year, 2005, beginning in April, is the first time in several years that I have observed any of the above-named species in significant numbers. Due to the protection, that is the closing of the interior portions of the Point where the birds had no disturbance, the success rate in fledging was absolutely astounding!

Let me talk of the importance of birding on the Outer Banks. Birding was not mentioned during the Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, interim planning session. It's almost as though some people consider it a non-use of the beach. There are 60 million birders in the USA, the most rapidly rising outdoor pastime. Heaven help us if 60 million descended upon the National Seashore, but following are some of the occasions that find birders in ORV's at Cape Point, and other beaches on the Outer Banks. ~~These people are~~ from NC, surrounding states, many of the other 50, and a few foreign countries.

Wings over Water is an annual eastern North Carolina festival that began in 1997. Over the course of a weekend in early November, there will be up to five field trips to Cape Point, averaging four 4x4 vehicles each trip, with four passengers in each car. Beginning in 2000 an added field trip to Hatteras Spit has averaged two trips with two cars each trip carrying four people in each car. Among the target birds for these excursions are gulls, terns, American Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers, Piping Plovers.

The Cape Hatteras Christmas Bird Count, a serious winter census that was established in New England in 1903 by the National Audubon Society, began here in 1981, and occurs at the end of December. Multiple groups drive to Cape Point and Hatteras Inlet during count day. The participants come from four states in addition to NC and number around 30 each year. The count compiler has a listing of all the species seen during the 23 years. Piping Plover was seen 15 of those 23 years, the highest counts: 16 in '82, 8 in '92, 11 in '93, 9 in '97, 10 in '98. None were found in 2000-2002. Three were seen in 2003, one in 2004. American Oystercatchers were found every year from 1981 through 1992, the highest count being 30 in 1985, 14 in '88, '92. None were seen in 2001-2004.

Cape Hatteras Bird Club's regular 4x4 trips to Cape Point began in 1993. The trips go every Tuesday September-May and other times upon request by out-of-town guests. Participation averages 10 people in two to three vehicles each trip, for some 32 Tuesdays a year.

Additional uses include regular annual trips organized by school groups and out-of-state bird clubs. Local and visiting birders who are not on organized trips can be found at the beach at any season. When the Carolina Bird Club has a winter meeting on the Outer Banks, there are usually three days of 4x4 trips that average six to eight vehicles per trip.

In conclusion, it is not just local birders, but a "community of birders" who come here. Cape Hatteras National Seashore sees local, state, national, and international birders. This area is an important bird magnet. It is in the interests of birders to be able to find their target birds. It is also in their interests that the target birds are here because they are protected and maintained. Some parts of the beach must be closed at certain times of year in order to give endangered, threatened and migratory bird species the proper places to nest, feed, and grow to fledging. These species are confined only to the habitats where they can nest and feed. They don't have the ability to adapt to other habitats. They have no choices. Drivers of ORV's do have choices.

As a serious birder, I support the closures that protect the birds that I have always come here to enjoy. I would agree with the trained biologists and the Protected Species Management Strategy Laws and NPS Management Policies. Although I enjoy observing Cape Point's avian life "up close and personal", the welfare of the birds is of more importance to me. A few short weeks of total protection in the summer and year around resting and feeding closures spell survival to the species that make the Seashore so meaningful to me and to the other birders who come here.

My husband and I would like to help again in the 2006 season with monitoring chicks. We hope that a route to Cape Point can be maintained for fishermen so that the unrest of 2005 will not be repeated. Above all, though, we want to see an increase in the nesting pairs of all the birds that successfully raised chicks in the interior section of Cape Point.

Patricia J. Moore

I am an active member of American Birding Association, National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count, Carolina Bird Club, Cape Hatteras Bird Club, North Banks Bird Club, Maryland Ornithological Society, Arkansas Audubon Society, and I also belong to the Nature Conservancy, Wilderness Society, the National Wildlife Association.

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November 14, 2005