

## False Cape Spring Trip - February 24<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013

By Bruce Julian

We almost had a full house this time, (15) but Margaret stepped into a hole on Friday before we left on Sunday and twisted her ankle. Not being able to go with the group she told me not to worry about leaving her behind because of all the planning and with all the food everyone had bought that she wanted us to go and have a good time. I wouldn't have went off and left her if it had not been for her two sisters Linda & Carolyn and a neighbor who said they would take very good care of her, which they did, and I really THANK them for that.

Our group met at Little Island City Park, there in Sandbridge and all arrived before 3:00 o'clock. John G. had called me at 2:00 o'clock and said that he was stuck in traffic on the west side of the Hampton Tunnel and was not sure if he would make the 3:00 o'clock meeting time, but by 2:55 P.M. he drove into the parking lot. Everyone help him put his gear on the bus and we headed south towards False Cape State Park, 9 miles away. With 14 people and our gear and the food we all brought the bus was full, a 64 passenger bus that is, not sure if we would have had room for Margaret or not. No ! we would always have room for Margaret.

The trip takes us through Back Bay Wildlife Refuge and here we saw all kinds of birds not in big flocks, because most of them had already stopped here to eat and rest and fly on south for the winter. On the way out we did see about 1000 Snow Geese on one of the ponds there in False Cape, not sure which way they were going because of all this warm weather we have had they may had been flying north. We drove by real slow and none flew away. Guess they were eating and having a good time there at the park.

Reaching the Environmental Education Center (EEC) where we would be for 4 nights and 5 days we began unloading all the food and gear which everyone had brought. First I had everyone to meet inside so to give each their bunk for the week. As always the group had the right break down to give a place for the men to sleep downstairs and with enough room upstairs for the ladies. Don't asked me how it worked out that way but it did and has always worked out. The three couples, which we had, were given the 3 rooms upstairs. I know Margaret was not there, but she was in spirit so I took the room anyway.

On this trip we had 8 men and 6 women with : Diana, Dottie, Sandy, Juliet, Natalie and Christine with Frank, Lou, John, Lee, Mike, Mark, Milton and Bruce. Christine & Frank along with Mike were first timers for our trip but everyone else had been on at least one trip before and some had been on all 19 trips, guess there must be something good at False Cape State Park. With all the food put away and everyone checking out the 2 bathrooms, we headed out for our first hike.

On the Sunday before I had mapped out two GPS Courses for the group to be divided into A-Team and B-Team and with the use of the park's GPS'S find 5 bottles bury up to their necks, on a route about 1 mile long. Well, we did have a winner, it was B-Team and the prizes this year were a pocket flashlights, which everyone always say they should have with them when we go out for an evening hike, because I do tend to make our hikes a little long and they extend into the night. After both teams got to the finish line and I checked for the five bottle and made sure they did what the instructions told them to do with each bottle I awarded the prizes and we headed back to the EEC. I had picked up 5 pizzas on my way to the park and we heated them up and I think everyone (except maybe Mark) got filled up.

Monday Morning : On this day I had pancakes, sausages and an egg dish and Dottie volunteered to put it together for the group. ( thanks Dottie) Mark brought a nice electric fry pan and it along with the flat pan that Christine brought made the breakfast a lot easier. John cooked on the stove with the flat pan and I cooked on the electric pan and everything went very good. After breakfast we packed our lunches and water for the day and I drove everyone over to the shop where Chuck (Chief Ranger) was waiting for us. We climbed into two of the Park's Trucks and drove down to the work site to start the days work. Chuck and his two employees had already started with some of the poles and stringers the week before so we started in on nailing down the deck boards. This area of the park is at the south end next to North Carolina and about 3 miles from where we stay in the EEC building. There was a little mud, or maybe just so I won't get in trouble with the group, say there was a lot of MUD ! We nailed down about 70 feet of decking and tore down an old boat house on the first day. Everyone had rubber boots except 1 or 2 and we sure did need them. It was about 4 o'clock and we headed back to the EEC.

After we had our evening meal which Diana, Sandy, Mike and Lee prepared for us, (it was Meat loaf,) Milton and Bruce went out for a hike to pick-up his Game Camera which had been out for a week. The others stay in and talked and read books, we were back by 9:30 and we set around and talked some more till 11:00 P.M. and all went to bed.

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Tuesday Morning : On This day I had waffles and sausages and some of the egg dish that was left over from Monday. Frank brought one of his many waffle irons and I had 2 and he and I together made about 28 waffles, which all were eaten. Finishing breakfast we didn't need to pack a lunch, only water for the day, because the forecast was for rain about all day. We drove over to the Pole Barn (remember this Phyllis?) where we had plan on working on Wood Duck Boxes and Picnic Tables. This we could do inside, out of the rain, but it never did rain very much so we were outside about all day. We rebuilt 4 tables and 9 Wood Duck Boxes and put the tables back in the park at the campsite where we had picked them up that morning. For our lunch we drove back over to the EEC and some had Meat Loaf Sandwiches. The evening meal on Tuesday was a Casserole that Christine, Mark, Natalie, Lou and Frank had prepared for all.

After we cleaned up the dishes and the kitchen I went for a 4 mile hike by myself. The rain had stopped and it was warmer than it had been during the day and was a great night to hike. The full moon was trying to stay out, but the clouds kept covering it up as they raced by. I was almost to the ocean when the fog started to move in from the east which was funny because the clouds over my head were moving towards the east about 25 M.P.H. The fog made the temperature drop about 5 or 10 degrees in a matter of seconds, and I was glad I had my coat. I got back at 11:45 and all were snug in their beds fast asleep.

Wednesday Morning : On this day I made French Toast and Sausages and John helped me with that. The rain and clouds were gone so we were going back to the Boat Dock at Dudley Island so everyone had to pack their lunch and water for the day. Chuck needed a hour or two to put down a few more poles, so we pick-up all 9 Wood Duck Boxes and put some around the Wash Woods area. After this we headed down to where Chuck was and put up 2 more boxes and them started with the deck boards where we had left off two days before. It was about 3:00 P.M. when we finished this dock and everyone was glad to be able to get out of the mud and walk on dry land again. Back at the EEC everyone but 4 wanted to hike around the park after dark, so we had our evening meal which Milton, John, Juliet and Dottie prepared for us. (this was Pasta) After cleaning the dishes and kitchen 10 of us started on our hike. We wanted to get out to the tall platform before the Moon came up out of the ocean, and we did. We had to wait an extra 10 minutes to see the Moon because there were a few low clouds that stopped us from seeing it appear out of the water. As it climbed up into the sky we had a falling star drop down in the western sky and it was beautiful. We also picked out a few constellations in the sky and them looked at John's Cell Phone to see which animal was represented, Bear, Goat, or whatever. After about 4 miles we ended back at EEC, and all turn in for the night another good day.

Thursday Morning : On this day I was going to have French Toast again but the Chicken didn't lay enough eggs for that, so we made Cheese Toast, Sausages and any leftovers that was left. It wasn't pretty but it was good. Everyone packed-up their gear and clean the EEC somewhat and them all but 2 went for a hike down to the Cemetery and Church site. The two that stayed back, mop the floors and did a few last minutes cleaning jobs. (Thanks Juliet & Natalie) We were back to the EEC about 10:30 A.M. so I drove over to the shop and picked-up the bus and we loaded all our gear on it, minus the food, but there was still a lot of gear. Next stop was the Visitor Center, where we stay about one hour looking at all the merchandise and talking to Kyle, Cameron and Rebecca. Finally it was time to go and leave Paradise and go back to the noise and traffic of our world. It was fun while it lasted.

A trip would not be finished without a stop at Pungo Pizza & Ice Cream Parlor, which eleven of us did. Hope everyone had as much fun as I did and want to come back again real soon.