



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

January 4, 2013

*Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Til it's gone.
-Joni Mitchell*

Paving Paradise

In an *Inventary of the Natural Areas and Endangered Species of Brunswick County*, Richard LeBlond, Principal Scientist of the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, had this to say:

Brunswick County contains not only some of the most biologically significant areas in North Carolina, but along the entire U.S. Atlantic Coast. It supports more Federally Endangered or Threatened plant and animal species--15--than any other county in the state. It has the greatest diversity of natural communities in the state with 36 community types and subtypes. Brunswick County has the second highest number of rare species occurrences among North Carolina counties, and the second highest number of natural areas (sites). The county is a center of species diversity along the Atlantic Coast, with several species globally restricted to Brunswick County or adjacent areas. Some of the county's pine savannas have among the highest species richness of any similar sized area in temperate North America. The concentration of Coastal Plain ponds is the largest along the Atlantic Coast between Massachusetts and Florida.

You didn't know that, did you? There's more: "A total of 59 rare animals have been recorded from the county A total of 112 rare plants are known from the county Among these rare species are 22 federally designated animals and 22 federally designated plants."

A substantial part of the habitat diversity that supports these species and more common wildlife is located in the southeastern quadrant of the county. The entire quadrant is ranked as nationally significant; it includes specific sites of national significance: Bald Head Island, Battery Island, Boiling Spring Lakes wetland complex, Orton Plantation and Orton Pond, Pleasant Oaks Plantation, even the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point, which supports 26 species of rare plants and animals. The quadrant also takes in 18 other sites of state and regional significance. The 600 acres purchased by the State Ports Authority for the megaport include 86 acres of salt marsh, among the most biologically productive habitats in nature. That site has four coastal plain ponds, part of the largest concentration between Massachusetts and Florida.

Needless to say, much of this is at risk. We are faced with the archaic thinking at every level of government that jobs, at any cost and any price, are justified. Brunswick County embraced the nonsensical notion of a megaport at the Cape Fear, and continues to seek to sell out our natural heritage for heavy industry when a longer focus would see development that harmonizes with the natural treasure for which we are the stewards. Help us open those bureaucratic eyes. Join us!

Save the Cape, Inc

618 North Howe Street
www.savethecape.org

Southport, NC 28461