



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Light of Save the Cape*

March 14, 2014

*The 100th anniversary also represents a crossroads for our state parks system. While we are excited to celebrate the history and legacy of state parks in North Carolina, we also have a special responsibility and opportunity to plan for its future. We hope the anniversary will trigger even greater public support and involvement so we can ensure our most important natural and recreational resources are properly protected and available for generations to come.*  
–North Carolina State Parks and Recreation 2013 Annual Report

## ***A Little Help from our Friends***

We're pushing along with our project for a new State park in Brunswick County on the 600-acres on the Cape Fear River owned by the State Ports Authority. With a little help from some friends in academia and the relevant government agencies, we've learned some things about the site:

- The most compelling feature of the site is the special view of a relatively undisturbed part of the lower Cape Fear River from a high bluff near the river's edge. This is a unique feature; such a bluff only exists for a short distance along the river, and this is the only place it is accessible. We plan a combination walking trail and bikeway along the mile-long bluff, which commands a view all the way across to Fort Fisher.
- The bluff is a relict dune dating back to the Last Interglacial Period, about 125,000 years ago, when sea level was much higher than present and most of the Cape Fear peninsula–Carolina Beach to Bald Head–did not exist. This is a potential source of significant fossils.
- The bluff supports a Coastal Fringe Evergreen Forest, an increasingly rare natural community elsewhere succumbing to development. It has enormous live oaks, 275-300 years old, 60-year-old loblolly pine, water oak and hickory. An amazing place.
- The site has several fresh-water ponds supporting a variety of wildlife and vegetation, as well as freshwater marshes that grade into brackish marsh and finally salt marsh along the river. These are a biologically rich areas, representative of the region's biodiversity.

Much of the site, about 275 acres, has been cleared for farming. Although substantial natural areas have been lost, this presents an opportunity for recreational and educational facilities to be created without loss of those natural areas parks seek to preserve. We plan a park that people can use and enjoy, as well as admire: campgrounds, picnic grounds, bike roadways, walking trails, an amphitheater and events center, indoor and outdoor class rooms, a dock for water tours of the shallow parts of the river, botanic garden and arboretum, and the feature of which we shall be most proud—a new home for the Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter, to save and rehabilitate injured birds.

**Save the Cape, Inc**

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