



# Annual gull migration



Gulls soar and dive in Jordan Lake, hunting for the tread-fin shad, which die off during winter. Below, John and Bunny Shillito enjoy boating on a brisk day, while gulls congregate on the shore near Crosswinds Marina.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JOHN SHILLITO

When my wife and I fled the cold winters of New England in 1995 and moved to North Carolina, we soon discovered Jordan Lake and the Crosswinds Marina. The next year our son, Doug, and his wife, Sue, trailed down to us our 1961 Classic Boston Whaler, the 16' Eastport model which we had already enjoyed for thirty-five years with our four children and a series of small dogs. Rather than launch and retrieve our boat with each use, we opted to leave it in the water all year 'round, to be available for use more readily whenever good weather and the spirit called.



We noted that each winter, beginning about December, seagulls began to arrive from the coast. They congregated on breakwaters, piers, and parking spaces, and they could be seen far out over the water, circling and diving, apparently having a feeding frenzy on something delectable. We never knew just what they were after, presumably some small bait-fish driven up to the surface by larger predators below. We assumed they came because the fishing was good, and because they were protected from winter storms on the coast.

The winters can get pretty cold, but only once have we seen the lake partially freeze. In the marina where

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# A conservation plan for the Rocky River

By Sonny Keisler

The Triangle Land Conservancy and the Rocky River Heritage Foundation have released the "Rocky River Conservation Assessment." This planning document for the Rocky River watershed highlights four major planning goals: (1) increasing recreational opportunities along the Rocky River and its major tributaries, (2) conserving plant and wildlife habitats, (3) protecting farms and forests, and (4) improving water quality. The plan, financed by the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund, will be implemented through long-term public and private efforts similar to those undertaken along the Eno River in Durham County over the past several decades. The plan has been developed as an integral part of a larger watershed conservation program initiated by the Rocky River Heritage Foundation.

**Recreation:** There are only two public access locations along the Rocky River and both are owned by the Triangle Land Conservancy: the White Pines Preserve and Woods Mill Bend. To increase public access in the watershed, the conservation assessment recommends county-owned boat access sites up and down the river plus five additional locations for low-impact recreation and educational facilities. Among the low-impact facilities recommended are parks adjacent to Siler City's upper reservoir and Chatham Central High School. A linear park along the Rocky River in the Central Carolina Business Campus on U.S. Highway 64 is another site. This location could include a designed ecosystem along Loves Creek that would serve as a wildlife and educational site as

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# Food safety bill a threat to sustainable farms

By Julian Sereno

The 15th annual Piedmont Farm Tour, which took place on the last weekend in April, was a big success. The tour featured a record 40 small sustainable farms in six counties – Chatham, Orange, Alamance, Durham, Person and Caswell – that all opened their doors to the public and discussed and explained their farming methods.

"More than 12,000 attended the event," said Roland McReynolds, executive director of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, which sponsors the Farm Tour.

Farms such as these form the supply chain for food coops, such as Chatham Marketplace and Weaver Street Market as well as the growing



Mike Perry and Cathy Jones are celebrating 20 years of farming on the Perry-Winkle Farm.

PHOTOS BY JULIAN SERENO



Farmers' Market movement. Farmers' Markets in Chatham and surrounding counties have proliferated, with new ones opening every year. At the Carrboro Farmers' Market, one of the oldest and busiest, as of May 1 customers can pay with credit cards, debit cards and food stamps.

Farmers' Markets feed the growing locavore movement – where people eat locally grown foods, rather than foods grown at factory farms all over the world.

Factory farms have been the source of some of the recent dreadful food-born epidemics, such as the one

caused by E-coli contaminated spinach that killed some and sickened many across the country.

In an effort to prevent such mass poisonings and improve food safety, the U.S. Senate has before it the Food Safety Modernization Act. It would increase the power of the Food and Drug Administration to tighten up inspecting, reporting and recording keeping. It would make factory farms clean up their

acts. And it would also cost all of those small sustainable farms thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of additional work. It would drive many out of business.

At the Perry-Winkle Farm near the Chatham-Orange county line, carload

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