

# Congratulations to the 2010 Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Winners!

**CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Lewis Ledford, Raleigh • The long-time director of the North Carolina State Parks system, Ledford has led from the ground up, starting his career as an entry-level park ranger at Umstead State Park. Over the years he has shaped the state park system to be the envy of the nation, with programs as far-ranging as energy efficiency and massive and much-needed expansion.

**WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • John Bishop, Kannapolis • In 1999 this businessman and Eagle Scout began to purchase land in Anson County to help conserve open space in the rapidly developing Piedmont. His work has helped ensure the integrity of the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge and the Rocky and Pee Dee rivers.

**SPORTSMAN of the Year** • Hal Atkinson, Raleigh • Atkinson served for 20 years as chief of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Division of Wildlife Management, but his work for wildlife didn't end with his retirement. He is a director of the Camp-Younts Foundation and is a strong supporter of the N.C. Camouflage Coalition.

**LAND CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Ernest B. "Ernie" Averett III, Oxford • Averett farms and manages an 880-acre family farm in Granville County, and spends countless hours working on behalf of his beloved Tar River. He is a founding and current board member of the Tar River Land Conservancy, and has volunteered hundreds of hours lobbying elected officials on clean water issues.

**WATER CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Yadkin Riverkeeper, Inc., Winston-Salem • The grassroots organization worked tirelessly to advocate for the Yadkin River, from its headwaters to its main stem, in corporate boardrooms and public meetings and the halls of the state legislature. Yadkin Riverkeeper has generated more than 10,000 media stories on clean water issues.

**FOREST CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Wilburn (Wib) Owen, Garner • For nearly three decades, Owen has worked to manage North Carolina's public lands for the maximum benefit of wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts, first with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and now with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR of the Year** • Renee Strnad, Raleigh • As an extension forestry specialist at N.C. State University, Strnad has managed some of the state's most energized wildlife programs for youth and college students. From the Fur, Fish, N Game Rendezvous to Project Learning Tree to the Environmental Educators of N.C., Strnad has worked to connect young people and the outdoors.

**YOUTH CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Kyle Kittelberger, Raleigh • A rising high school senior, Kittelberger volunteers for N.C. State Parks, Wake Audubon, the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, and the Boy Scouts of America. He has built boardwalks and recycling centers, operates a bald eagle nest camera, and has logged hundreds of hours monitoring birds, butterflies, and box turtles.

**CONSERVATION COMMUNICATOR of the Year** • Craig Holt, Snow Camp • Craig Holt works to ensure that the agencies responsible for hunting, fishing, and game species are accountable to the public. Holt held the outdoors beat for newspapers in Burlington, and Durham before freelancing for *North Carolina Sportsman*.

**CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION of the Year** • Muddy Sneakers • More than 3,000 students have participated in a Brevard-based 12-part curriculum that focuses on science education in natural settings. This non-profit organization oversees 13 field instructors in 5 school systems to get kids out of the classroom and into the outdoors...

**LEGISLATOR of the Year** • Senator Fletcher Hartsell • A longtime member of the Environmental Review Commission, Hartsell helped pioneer many of North Carolina's leading water protections, and is a tireless advocate of the public's role in the future of the Yadkin River.

**MUNICIPAL CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • City of Raleigh, Raleigh • Since 2005, Raleigh's Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative has protected buffers along 57 miles of streams, protecting wildlife and water quality and enhancing the quality of life for citizens.

**BUSINESS CONSERVATIONIST of the Year** • Great Outdoor Provision Company, Raleigh • From local land trusts to Boy Scout troops, from the Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail to local rescue mission, the Great Outdoor Provision Company gives back to North Carolina, embodying the best of local ownership, entrepreneurship, and investment in the lives of its customers. Founded in 1972, the company now has seven stores in seven North Carolina cities.

**HUNTER SAFETY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR/ORGANIZATION of the Year** • Terry Boyce, Elizabeth City • Boyce has volunteered as a hunter safety instructor since 1989, missing only a single class in the last 20 years and donating more than 1,000 hours of teaching time. Boyce is the founder and director of the Dream Hunt and Fishing Program for youth with serious illnesses and physical handicaps.

**NATURAL RESOURCES SCIENTIST of the Year** • Gene Vaughan, Mooresville • Vaughan has worked for Duke Energy as a fishery and wildlife scientist for more than 30 years, working on some of the most far-ranging water and wildlife projects in North Carolina history, from hydro relicensing negotiations to migratory bird protections to years of volunteer service on the state's Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee.

**WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER of the Year** • Al Kittredge, Fayetteville • Kittredge has volunteered at the John E. Pechmann Fishing Education Center for more than a decade. A passionate worker for the Wounded Warrior program, Kittredge also oversees a pool of 45 other volunteers working at the center.

**NCWF CHAPTER of the Year** • Piedmont Area Wildlife Stewards, Gastonia • Formed in 2009, PAWS works to conserve, preserve, and protect the wildlife habitat of the Gaston County area. Its youth programs, osprey projects, and fish and wildlife enhancement works have involved hundreds of volunteers.

**AFFILIATE of the Year** • North Carolina Handicapped Sportsmen Inc., Nags Head • Formed in 2005, NCHS has worked to provide sportsmen a way to keep handicapped outdoors men and women directly connected to the passions of hunting and fishing. The group works on the ground, in the woods, on the water, and through social media—whatever it takes to meet the challenge of helping sportsmen live out their passion for the outdoors.

**WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER of the Year** • Sergeant Jon Evans, Mebane • Sgt. Evans is an enforcement supervisor for Alamance, Orange, and Caswell counties, and an instructor in subject control and arrest, ground defense, and firearms. He also is a member of the Wildlife Resources Commission Color Guard.

**MARINE FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT OFFICER of the Year** • Sergeant Jason Walker, Southport • A 13-year veteran of the marine patrol, Sgt. Walker is in charge of marine enforcement in Hyde County and along the Outer Banks. Known for modeling the attributes of a leader, Walker works to keep morale high in a demanding field of expertise.