

Southeast Region

In his article "Restoring the Bald Eagle" (*American Scientist*, May-June 1988 issue), NPS Research Biologist Ted Simons describes the efforts of a cooperative project involving the Sutton Avian Research Center, the states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma and North Carolina, the University of Florida, the USFWS and NPS to restore populations of bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in the southeastern U.S. The project is divided into three phases – egg recycling, captive propagation, and hacking – and seeks to establish 90 new nests in the Southeast, according to USFWS's Southeastern States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan. Gulf Islands NS, where Simons is stationed, is one of five hacking sites under the program.

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Simons, the Gulf Islands, and the southeastern bald eagle restoration project also are the focus of a full-color feature article published in the national *Life* magazine ("Into the Air, Little Baldies!" by Michael Wallis, May 1988 issue). Copies of both the *American Scientist* and *Life* articles can be had by writing to Ted Simons, Gulf Islands National Seashore, 3500 Park Road, Ocean Springs, MS 39564.

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In cooperation with the USDA Forest Service's Spruce Fir Cooperative, GRSM researchers have been involved in an intensive ongoing study of the effect of atmospheric pollutants on eastern spruce-fir ecosystems. The 66 permanent vegetation plots established within the park will provide resource managers with site-specific information on the biological health of the park's 18,000 acres of spruce-fir forests. Plots are in their fifth consecutive year of evaluation; annual data on growth, mortality, foliar symphonology, and regeneration success will be analyzed this fall.

Spruce-fir crews also have been documenting occurrence of rare and endangered plant populations indigenous to high elevation forests. This information is being forwarded on to appropriate personnel for inclusion in the park's new Natural Heritage Data Base.

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To provide "ground truth" for a vegetation type map made from Landsat Imagery, a crew of six people sampled vegetation (trees only) at approximately 270 nonpermanently marked points in GRSM, divided equally among three topographic quadrangles in the eastern, western, and central portions of the park. The data will be analyzed (a) to derive vegetation type names for the 14 types depicted in the satellite imagery, and (b) to describe the species variability within each of the designated vegetation types.

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Scientists and resource managers in the Caribbean and Western Atlantic are working together on a 3-5 year project funded primarily by the NPS to establish long-term assessment programs for coral reefs under NPS jurisdiction in Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a basis for more effective management. In April 1988, Dr. Caroline S. Rogers, Research Scientist for the Virgin Islands NP, coordinated a meeting of 25 scientists and managers of marine protected areas to discuss priorities for long-term monitoring and to recommend appropriate methods and approaches. It was agreed that long-term assessment of coral reefs should take place at three levels: 1) routine gathering of data on basic environmental parameters such as temperature, salinity, and turbidity; 2) tracking of benthic reef organisms with a combination of photographic and transect/quadrat methods and documentation of fish populations; and 3) experimental research on system components following detection of change. Recent Caribbean-wide events have underscored the need for a regional, long-term approach to reef studies. Better understanding of reef dynamics will help in differentiating human and natural causes of disturbance.

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On July 9-10 the Southeast Region held a workshop to discuss sea turtle management objectives. Participants (ranging from Natural Resources Management Specialists to Interpreters) discussed sea turtle biology, nest protection, research and strandings in the parks. There are 11 parks in the region that play a role in the recovery

of sea turtle. The USFWS's sea turtle coordinator from the southeast participated.

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