

Flora & Fauna

SPECIAL ISSUE

Spring 2018

of the Coastal Carolinas



Preservation efforts
are helping to restore
threatened species

Preserving habitat

Of the more than 400 species of birds found in the Carolinas, perhaps the most majestic are the colonial wading birds. Characterized by long legs, long necks and long, pointed bills, these charismatic and graceful denizens of shores, lagoons, and wetlands search for food—fish, frogs, and small invertebrates, such as shrimp, crabs, and crayfish.

Herons and egrets both belong to the Ardeidae family, however, there is no clear distinction between the two. In general, species that are white or have ornate plumage are called egrets. You can identify herons and egrets in flight because of their retracted necks, unlike their cousin the ibis, which flies with an outstretched neck. In the late 1800s, Great Egrets were hunted nearly to extinction for their feathers. This led to the first laws protecting endangered birds.



Amazing migration

As a result of what researchers assert is a “catastrophic drop” in the number of monarchs migrating from the northern part of the United States and Canada to Mexico, a number of conservation efforts are underway. Mexican authorities have redoubled efforts to stop illegal logging in the mountain area where the butterflies spend the winter. In August 2014, scientists from a number of organizations filed a petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requesting that monarchs be listed as “threatened.”

Perhaps the most significant efforts are being made with respect to the monarchs’ most important food source and larval host—milkweed plants. The world’s struggle against weeds may be succeeding, but in winning that war, the battle to save the monarch is being lost. Milkweed loss means monarch loss. Experts today are studying ways to restore milkweed growth in the areas frequented by migrating butterflies. Even citizen scientists and backyard gardeners can help by planting milkweed, but caution is also required because not every variety of milkweed is appropriate for monarch purposes.



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