

## Jeff's excellent DMV adventure

By Jeff Davidson

I received a notice in the mail from the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Five years had passed and it was time for me to renew my driver's license. Does anyone relish this? I put the task off for weeks on end, but finally, three days before the deadline (my birthday), I had no choice but to face the music.

Studying the North Carolina Driver's Manual in earnest for about 30 minutes, I made some notes to reinforce what I had learned. I chose to drive to the DMV on a Monday, in the early afternoon of a bleak day when snows were threatening. When I walked in the door, no one was seated in the waiting area: I had guessed right about the timing. The counter clerk said, "Take this number and you'll be called shortly," but before I could sit down, I was called.

I walked over to station #7 where a friendly woman asked me for my driver's license. As I gave it to her, she typed a few things into her computer, and then asked me to look into the visual device on her desk. She said, "can you read the top row?" and I read the letters. Next she asked me to read two rows of signs that contained full wording. I did so. Then she asked me to read two rows of signs that only showed the shape, but not the wording or the color, and I whipped through it in seconds. The entire test lasted about two minutes, if that long.

She thanked me, and sent me to the photo desk. Ten seconds later I was done. As I walked out the door, I noticed that my total time in the DMV had been three minutes! In my whole life, I cannot recall an interaction with any government agency — federal, state, or local — that went so smoothly and so pleasantly. I drove home feeling ebullient. I called my daughter and told her of the incident. Then I decided to write this article.

Sometimes you are totally surprised by the efficiency of institutions you had long deemed all but hopeless. Sure, I arrived on a most opportune day. Still, I can't help but wonder: Who is the genius behind the North Carolina DMV?

Jeff Davidson, "The Work-Life Balance Expert®," has written 56 books, and is a professional speaker. His website is [www.BreathingSpace.com](http://www.BreathingSpace.com).

## TOURISTS

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enhance the appeal for visitors seeking a break from the daily routine. Some destinations are known for one or a few key assets. Chatham County is rich in multiple things to do and see. Some places are geared toward couples or adventurers.

Chatham is home to almost 14,000 acres of water at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, plus three rivers; the Haw, Rocky and Deep. Paddlers, birders and hikers are among the specific types of travelers that find the area's eco-tourism assets diverse and worth the trip.

Championship and challenging golf courses draw travelers as well for day trips and overnight packages. Day spas are also located in our area, with the ultimate in relaxing treatments. The indulgences are affordable and available for overnight packages in combination with a stay at a bed and breakfast or inn.

Food is an essential part of every vacation. We've got a great mix, again, of what everyone wants—hearty country favorites, farm-to-fork delights and fine cuisine in elegant ambiances. Many of our restaurants serve food from five of our farmers' markets and local and regional farmers. It's an elevated experience for visitors to know where their food is coming from and they find it exceptional. Coffee itself is available throughout the county, including a mobile coffee place.

Some of the heartiest food is served here, with extra helpings of southern hospitality, which is what everyone can enjoy once in a while.

We're home to tastings and tours, a great way to meet others, learn and, on occasion, talk directly with the owner of the business. Southern Supreme's confections; tastings and tapas at Chatham Marketplace; wine tastings at Horizon Cellars, SilkHope Winery and Starrlight Mead are a few places to enjoy good food and drink. Chatham County is home to Ferrington House Restaurant, the nation's only AAA Five Diamond restaurant certified by the Green Restaurant Association.

Our area is also a destination for year-round events, which draw visitors for the day or overnight. Nature, heritage, art, music and cooking are themes of festivals and workshops that bring families, groups and couples to the county.

Music on porches and patios throughout the county also make it a haven for those who love to play and/or listen to music you'll find it in Bear Creek, Bynum, Pittsboro, Chapel Hill and parts in between. An area that serves as a multifaceted destination, easy to explore and appealing to just about everyone is fortunate. New and unique things to do can fill a few days' worth and, even better, it continues to develop at a gradual pace.

Neha M. Shah is director of travel and tourism for the Pittsboro-Siler City Convention and Visitors' Bureau.

## JORDAN LAKE

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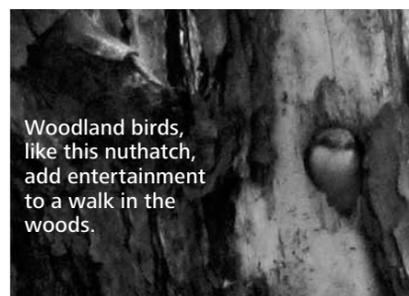
migratory waterfowl, herons, egrets, other shorebirds, and gulls, while "The woods provide habitat for a wide variety of sparrows, woodland warblers, tanagers, vireos, and other woodland birds."

On a sunny afternoon in mid-March many birds were around. Around the parking lot, there was a flock of what looked like song sparrows, and towhees called from the brush. White-throated sparrows were eating immature seeds of winged elms. Upland chorus frogs called from puddles scattered in the area and a larger seasonal pond has salamander larvae, and both marbled and spotted salamanders live in the area. A diminutive brown-headed nuthatch hammered inside a cavity at the top of a small pine snag, pausing to eye intruders from the entrance. Its mate flitted around higher in the pines. There were also many white-breasted nuthatches. Most birds were in the deciduous trees. There were common crows, male red-bellied woodpeckers, a male cardinal, chickadees, titmouses, and migrating yellow-rumped warblers. There was a conspicuous warbling call, but the singers were hidden, unless they were the yellow-rumped warblers.

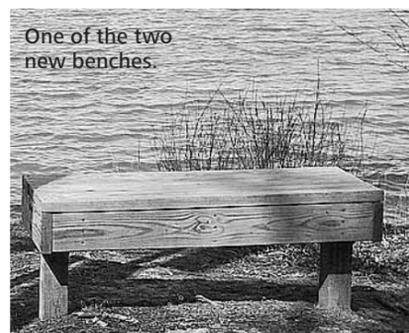
The first little white falcate orangetips and orange question mark or comma butterflies of spring, as well as moths, were on the wing, though most flowers, such as jasmine, cinquefoils, and dewberries, were not yet open. The warm sunshine brought out a sinuous 6" ground skink in the leaves.

The Platform has a good north and northwest view, possibly up to the area of the old platform, but that also exposed it to a cold wind.

Breakers were carving away sand they had pushed up earlier. The Lake was quiet, and most migratory waterfowl should be gone by March. Along the shore there are buttonbushes, which will be full of swallowtail butterflies in summer. The Boy Scout trail leads to an exposed outcropping of white sandstone above brown mudstone nearby. There is more deciduous forest along the main body of the Lake and a grove of small redbuds. The area is open at night for stargazing or searching for owls, flying squirrels, or moths.



Woodland birds, like this nuthatch, add entertainment to a walk in the woods.



One of the two new benches.

Deer tracks and squirrel nests revealed a few of the area's mammals. The area is managed as a gameland by the Commission, so there can be hunting Monday through Saturday, but hunters are mostly likely east of the Platform, and most hunting seasons are over now. Visitors can go off the trails, but a sign warns of ticks, and small red ticks were in the brush in March.

There is a lot of evidence of former habitation, especially the invasive non-natives near the road. There are nice clumps of yellow and white daffodils at the trailhead, but less well-behaved Chinese privet, Chinese wisteria, English ivy, and Japanese stilt-grass are rampant nearby.

The site is still being developed, and people can help out through New Hope Audubon. Management is funded by the non-game and endangered wildlife fund ([www.ncwildlife.org/give](http://www.ncwildlife.org/give)), which appears on tax forms this month. Jeff Marcus encourages communities near the Lake to use the Green Growth Toolkit ([www.ncwildlife.org/greengrowth](http://www.ncwildlife.org/greengrowth)) to reduce impacts on wildlife and the ability of the Commission to use controlled burns and other tools.

Michael Pollock is a freelance writer living in southern Durham who founded Northeast Creek Stream Watch. He studied biology and anthropology at UNC and has an interest in Fortean phenomena.

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