

Harnett County's Natural Wonder



One of Harnett County's most impressive assets lies about nine miles west of Lillington off U.S. 421. If you've been to Raven Rock State Park, you know what a treasure it is, but did you know how the park got its name or that its creation is heavily connected with Campbell University?

Park Superintendent Jeff Davidson manages the park and oversees a staff that includes two rangers, two maintenance employees and an office assistant. Davidson has been superintendent at Raven Rock since 2012. His first encounter with the park came more than a decade ago when he frequented Raven Rock as a student at Campbell University. After graduating in 2005, he worked part-time at the park. He left that job, but always hoped he would find his way back to Raven Rock. As it happens, Raven Rock means a great deal to Davidson for another reason.

"It's where my wife and I used to date before we were married," he said. "I've always had a love for Raven Rock."

Today, Davidson and his wife, Hannah, live in the park with their two children.

The history of Raven Rock State Park goes back to before the United States was a nation.

Samuel Northington moved to the area in the mid-1700s. He operated a ferry system, which

was the main travel route between Fayetteville and Raleigh until the early 1900s when a bridge was built across the Cape Fear River in Lillington.

Prior to the mid-1800s, the centerpiece of Raven Rock State Park – the 150-foot-tall, mile-long rock that gives the park its name – was named Patterson's Rock after Buies Creek resident Gilbert Patterson.

According to legend, Patterson decided to move west and was using the river to transport his belongings when a severe storm wrapped his boat around a rock and he broke his leg.

"He found himself stranded underneath the cliffs," said Davidson.

He said Patterson grew hungry and thirsty. Eventually, some wolves in the area chased a deer off a cliff and it landed at Patterson's feet, providing sustenance. He was rescued by natives several days later and the rock was named in honor of his adventure.

The name was changed to Raven Rock around 1854. Davidson said he's heard two different legends about where the name originated.

The first story, which Davidson said is most likely, is that the rock was renamed by the Cape Fear Deep River Navigation Company, a steamboat company which used the river and named it

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Raven Rock because they said ravens roosted on the rocks.

"We don't have ravens here now," said Davidson.

The more interesting legend tells of a Tuscarora American Indian chief named Raven, who was captured by a local tribe and held in a cave on a cliff. A woman from the local tribe fell in love with Raven and took care of him by lowering food into the cave. Members of her tribe caught her doing this and told her that if she could keep Raven alive for a year, she could marry him. She kept him alive and the rock was named after the chief.

Regardless of how Raven Rock got its name, it took another century for the land to become a state park and if not for the efforts of one local man, it might not be around for us to enjoy today.

Davidson said credit for Raven Rock's preservation should go to Dr. Robert "Bob" Soots, a Biology professor who worked at Campbell University in the 1960s and frequently took his students on field trips to the area now known as Raven Rock.

In 1965, Soots learned that a quarry company wanted to quarry some of the cliffs and the rock at the site, so he formed a movement to protect the area. He began taking people of influence to Raven Rock, driving them to the rock in Jeeps and bringing them down the Cape Fear River in rafts to camp at the site.

"He gave them an experience in hopes they would step in and protect it," said Davidson.

Soots approached the Harnett County Board of Commissioners, who got behind the movement and went to the General Assembly. Soots also brought then-Governor Bob Scott to come and view Raven Rock. Other supporters of Raven Rock included Campbell Geology professor Richard Martin and former U.S. Senator Robert Morgan of Lillington, who served as state attorney general at the time.

In 1969, legislation passed to protect Raven Rock. A Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant was used to purchase 220 acres from J.C. and Dorothy Cummings and another 170 acres were donated by Burlington Industries. On March 19, 1970, Raven Rock State Park became the first state park since Mount Mitchell in 1915 to be



Visitors enjoy hiking along Raven Rock State Park's 12 miles of hiking trails.

protected with state funds.

Once Raven Rock was established as a state park, staff went to work building trails and other amenities to make it more inviting to visitors. Davidson said most of the trails were completed by 1975. The scenic overlook was built in 1977. A maintenance complex was added in 1993 and a new visitor center opened in 2010, part of a \$4.3 million improvement project.

Today, the park spans 4,684 acres on both the north and south sides of the Cape Fear River. It includes 20 miles of trails – 12 miles of hiking trails and another eight miles of equestrian trails on the north side of the river. There are 16 camp sites, which can be accessed by hiking or by canoe. The landscape is like nothing else in the area.

"Someone once said it was like God pinched off a part of the mountains, picked it up and dropped it in Harnett County," said Davidson. "You've got some really neat mountainous terrain, you've got cliffs, waterfalls, rapids and of course, you've got the river."

He said a lot of the park's non-Harnett County visitors come from Fayetteville and other parts of Cumberland County. Others come from Wake County towns like Cary and Garner. Raven Rock is particularly popular with the military community at Fort Bragg. Davidson said most awareness of the

park is generated by word of mouth as people come, enjoy their experience and tell their friends.

He said Raven Rock is a valuable economic engine for Harnett County.

"The average visitor spends \$24 in the local community," he said. "We average 200,000 visitors a year, so that's about \$5 million Raven Rock adds to the local economy."

Davidson said he is trying to bring more programs to the park, though staffing levels are lower than ever before. He said he wants to make the park more kid-friendly. Next year, work will begin on 18 miles of mountain biking trails that will be added to the park.

"We've had a huge demand for that," said Davidson, who said he's hoping to recruit volunteers to assist with the creation of the trails.

So what's Davidson's favorite part of Raven Rock?

"It's the overlook," he said without hesitation. "I love the way the sun sets directly over the river and reflects in the water."

For more information about Raven Rock State Park including hours of operation, directions, events and free programs, go to <http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/raro/main.php>. You can also check out the "Friends of Raven Rock State Park" Facebook page for additional information.

Department Spotlight

Harnett County Public Library

With school letting out in a matter of weeks and summer just around the corner, parents in Harnett County will be looking for activities to keep their kids occupied this summer, and one resource they've come to rely on over the years is the Harnett County Public Library's Summer Reading Program.

This year's program kicks off Saturday, June 13 at 11 a.m. at the Harnett County Public Library at 601 South Main St., Lillington. The theme for this summer is "Every Hero Has a Story" and participants are encouraged to come to the kickoff event dressed as their favorite super hero.

The Summer Reading Program includes numerous events in June and July at all six library locations in the county. Events include movies, games and numerous special presenters from magicians and ventriloquists to beekeepers and a petting zoo. There will also be crafts and other programs including one on Monday, June 29 called

"Not All Superheroes Wear Capes" where children will write and draw thank you cards to deployed soldiers. The cards will be included in care packages going overseas.

Children's Librarian Tracy Bagnato said the focus of the Summer Reading Program is to keep kids engaged in reading and learning during the summer months, a time when, studies show, children may lose up to four months of what they've learned during the previous school year.

"We're offering incentives and prizes and encouraging parents to sit down with their kids and take 10 minutes to read with their children so they don't lose that base of knowledge," Bagnato said.

While children are undoubtedly the focus of the Summer Reading Program, the library's goal is to involve the whole family. That's why this year, in addition to the traditional programs for children (Grades K-2), Tweens (Grades

3-5) and Teens (Ages 13-18), Harnett County has added an Adult Summer Reading Club where adults are encouraged to read or listen to five books, keep a reading log and turn it in to receive a prize and be entered into a grand prize drawing at the end of the summer.

"We've been doing really well with the kids for a long time," said Harnett County Library Director Patrick Fitzgerald. "This is something we're excited about adding to our slate."

With that in mind, Fitzgerald brought in Reference Librarian Jennifer Taft, who's working to develop more programs targeted at adults.

Current library offerings for adults include numerous classes on topics like how to download the library's free eBooks, a crash course for using computers and job readiness classes in conjunction with Central Carolina Community College. Another adult program, the Turning Pages Book Club, meets at the Harnett County Public Library the third Thursday of every month at 10 a.m.

Taft is also looking to start new programs including "Cook the Book" where participants will select a recipe from one of three cookbooks in the library, prepare the dish and bring it to share and discuss their experience making the recipes during a quarterly meeting. She is also partnering with organizations like Harnett County Master Gardeners about hosting educational programs at the library for adults.

The effort is all part of a push by the library to cement itself as a true community space.

"We want to make sure people know that the library is more than just books and computers," said Fitzgerald. "We still have those items, but we're also a community hub for educational and recreational needs."

The library boasts a newly-renovated meeting room which is available to the public, and a history room



Entertainer Mark Lippard performs during 2014's Summer Reading program.

where people can conduct research on plenty of topics related to Harnett County and North Carolina history. Library card holders also have access to free genealogy resources and microfilm copies of volumes of old newspapers on the library's website, as well as millions of library books from around the state as part of the NC Cardinal consortium where dozens of public library systems share resources through a single online catalog.

Beginning in July, the Harnett County Public Library will restore its Friday hours, opening every Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

"We've been closed on Fridays for five years and ever since then, nobody has stopped asking when we're going to be open on Fridays again," said Fitzgerald.

The library will also expand its collection of Spanish-language books and resources in July and will partner with Harnett County Economic Development to host meetings and events for entrepreneurs in the county. iPads will soon replace computers in the children's section to offer a more state-of-the-art experience along with educational games.

"We don't want to neglect any group," said Bagnato. "We want to make sure we touch on everything."

"People have a very fixed idea of what the public library is and we're trying to break that down," said Fitzgerald. "We want people to know about the diverse offerings we have and hopefully more people will start coming back to the library."

The Harnett County Public Library system includes the Harnett County Public Library in Lillington and the Anderson Creek Public Library at Anderson Creek Primary School. The system also includes partner libraries in Angier, Coats, Dunn and Erwin.

For more information on the 2015 Summer Reading Program, as well as other library programs, locations and hours, go to www.harnett.org/library.

Upcoming Events

- Central Carolina Community College will hold its 2015 Annual Foundation Furniture Auction Saturday, June 6 at 10 a.m. in the Miriello Building multipurpose room at CCC's Harnett County Campus, 1075 E. Cornelius Harnett Blvd., Lillington. More than 50 pieces of handcrafted wood and metalwork will be up for auction. Proceeds help provide scholarships for Harnett County students at the college through an endowed scholarship fund. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Bidding begins at 10 a.m. For more information or for a preview of auction items, visit www.cccc.edu/auction or call (910) 893-9101.
- The 14th annual Angier Bike Fest will be held Saturday, June 6 in Downtown Angier. There will be live music, a bike show, bike ride, barbecue cook off, swap meet, vendors, exhibits and inflatables for the kids. For more information, contact the Angier Chamber of Commerce at (919) 639-2500 or email angiercc@angierchamber.org.
- The Averbosboro Battlefield Museum will hold its annual yard sale Saturday, June 6 from 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. at 3300 N.C. 82, Dunn. For more information, call (910) 891-5019.
- The Erwin Wilderness Challenge will be held Saturday, June 6 in Downtown Erwin. The event involves biking 10 miles, kayaking eight miles and then running three miles. Register, at www.runtheeast.com. For more information, email info@dunntourism.org or call (910) 892-3282.
- The Harnett County Public Library will kick off its 2015 Summer Reading Program Saturday, June 13 from 11 to 12:30 at the library in Lillington at 601 S. Main St. The theme is "Every Hero Has a Story" and children are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite super hero.
- The 301 Endless Yard Sale will be held June 19-20 along U.S. 301 in Harnett County. For more information, call the Dunn Tourism Authority at (910) 892-3282.
- The next public meeting for the Harnett County Strategic Land Use and Comprehensive Economic Development Plan will be Tuesday, June 23 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Central Carolina Community College Health Science Building at 51 Red Mulberry Way, Lillington. The public is encouraged to come out and learn more about the vision for the future of Harnett County.
- The Harnett County Public Library will hold a class on how to download the library's free eBooks Thursday, June 25 at 10 a.m. To register, call the library at (910) 893-3446.
- The Town of Lillington will hold its annual Fourth of July celebration Saturday, July 4 from 2 until 9 p.m. Events will include a duck rodeo and duck derby along with inflatable water rides at the Cape Fear River and fireworks at dusk along with a classic car show at Lillington Park. For more information, contact the Lillington Chamber of Commerce at (910) 893-2864.
- This year's Wings Over Harnett fly-in will be held Saturday, October 17 at the Harnett Regional Jetport. Last year's event far exceeded expectations and we look forward to an even better event this year with more airplanes, more food vendors and more entertainment. This is a free event.

If you know of any important events for July or the coming months that need to be included in this newsletter, please email them to bhaney@harnett.org.

Jeffries Named County Manager; Stewart Named Deputy Manager

The Harnett County Board of Commissioners has made Joseph Jeffries Harnett County Manager and Paula Stewart Deputy County Manager.

The board voted unanimously on May 4 to make Jeffries county manager and approved a recommendation from Jeffries on May 18 to make Stewart deputy manager.

Jeffries assumed the role of interim county manager in December 2014, following the departure of then-County Manager Tommy Burns. Stewart was brought in as interim deputy county manager in February.

Jeffries grew up in Angier and graduated from Harnett Central High School. He attended East Carolina University, where he graduated in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning. He was hired as Chief Planner with the Harnett County Planning Department in 2002. He was made Manager of Planning Services in 2003 and was promoted to Planning Director in 2006. He was made director of Planning & Development Services in 2007. He earned a certificate in County Administration from the UNC Institute of Government in 2005. He previously served as interim county manager in 2012 and was made deputy county manager in April 2013. Prior to working for Harnett County, he held planning positions with the Town of Zebulon, Town of Cary and the Village of Pinehurst.

Jeffries said he is excited about the opportunity to serve as county manager.

"The position of county manager is



the pinnacle of my profession and to take on that role in my home county is an unbelievable feeling," he said. "We have an incredible group of employees working for Harnett County and I love working with them, as well as with our citizens and with the towns."

Jeffries said he brought Stewart in when he was interim manager because of her dependability and what she adds to the county's management team.

"Paula is someone you can rely on. She's someone you can go to when you need something done the right way," he said. "She's respected by the county's department heads and employees, and she is engaged in a variety of projects. She has a passion for this county and ... I think we're going to do some great things and make a positive mark on this county, and I'm really excited about going forward."

Stewart said she is excited to work with Jeffries as part of the county's management team.

"I have a lot of respect for him," she said of Jeffries. "I feel like we work well together and compliment one another's skill sets, and that because of where we've come from, we're going to be receptive to the needs of the department heads. I'm looking forward to working with them in this role and building on the relationships I already have with them."

She said her ultimate goal is to make a difference in Harnett County.

"I'm very proud to be a Harnett County native and I want our people to be proud of their heritage and where they come from," she said.

Stewart grew up in Lillington and currently resides in Angier. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a Certified Government Chief Information Officer with the UNC School of Government.

Stewart began working as Harnett County's IT Director in 1996. Prior to that, she worked at N.C. State University for nine years as a budget analyst and applications analyst. She is president of Harnett Central High School's Academic Booster Club and is a member of the Harnett Central High School Local Advisory Board. She is Buddy Backpack treasurer for the Angier area. She is a Sunday School teacher at Angier Baptist Church. Stewart and her husband, Del, have been married for 25 years and have two daughters – Kelly, 20, and Natalie, 17.

Jeffries and his wife, Maria, have been married 17 years and have three children.

Department Announcements

Engineering, Facilities & Maintenance

- Department work orders are now being entered online through Facility Dude. If your department would like to add additional users, contact Chris Johnson (cjohnson@harnett.org) for a login. Public Buildings has received more than 395 work orders since April 7 and staff have closed more than 360 orders.
- Engineering, Facilities & Maintenance has a cardboard baler. Please notify custodians if you have any cardboard so they can pick it up and deliver it to EFM to be baled.

Social Services

- Harnett County Social Services is in need of foster parents. Many foster children must be placed out of county due to current foster homes being full. If you are interested or know anyone interested in fostering children in the county, or would like more information, contact Kerry Willis at (910) 814-6803. A foster parent training class will be held beginning June 26.

If your department has an announcement for a future edition of The Cornelius, please email bhaney@harnett.org with the details.

Human Resources Corner

Best Practices for Using Credit

Is there a new car or TV in your future? If you don't have the full amount to cover your purchase, using credit can help with the expense. However, when you use credit without forethought, you could easily find yourself in debt and having a hard time paying back what you owe. Here are some best practices for using credit.

Know your credit types

Consumer credit is largely made up of two forms of credit: installment loans and revolving credit. Installment loans include auto loans, student loans and many types of personal loans. Installment loans have a set timeframe in which to pay off the loan and can have a fixed or variable interest rate. (e.g. Three year car loan at five percent.)

Revolving credit includes home equity lines of credit (HELOC), credit cards and store charge cards. With revolving credit, each time you make a purchase, it's like taking a small loan against your credit limit. Be aware that the interest rate attached to your card at the beginning may be subject to change at a later date. Also, while there is no set timeframe to pay (unlike a three year auto loan) the interest on your account balance will continue to add up until the bill is paid in full.

Do your homework

Planning to buy a car? Take time to shop around for the right lender. Search reputable auto-financing websites, financial institutions and car dealers to find the best interest rates on loans. This doesn't mean you should apply for multiple loans; just look. If you find interest rates are higher than anticipated, consider postponing your purchase. This could give you the needed time to pay

down debt and increase your credit score.

Understand your credit score

Too much debt can lower your credit score, which can impact your ability to qualify for a mortgage or car loan at a reasonable rate, for instance. But when you use credit wisely you create a good credit history, which can open many financial doors.

Carry balances of no more than 30% of your credit limit to enhance your credit profile. A higher credit score could mean a more affordable, lower loan rate.

Review the fine print

When applying for a new credit card, understand the costs involved and choose one that offers the lowest interest rate. Be sure to check the card agreement for information like cardholder fees, interest rate changes and user rewards to make sure the terms line up with your needs. Most of all only use the card when you can pay the balance in full each month so as not to add on additional debt.

Develop a spending plan

Another way to ensure you're using credit smartly is to develop a spending plan. Online tools such as mobile apps or a personal financial manager can help you track and manage your finances. A good plan addresses your fixed expenses and at the same time helps you reduce unnecessary spending. This way you get to keep more money in your pocket or pay down existing debt faster.

If you're looking for more ways to better manage your credit, contact a financial advisor today

Hart Recognized with 40 Under 40 Award

Harnett County employee Anitra Hart was honored as one of the 40 Under 40 recipients during the inaugural 40 Under 40 Gala Awards Banquet May 30, hosted by Think Smart of Erwin.



The awards banquet recognized 40 professionals under the age of 40 who have contributed to their community. Hart was recognized for her dedication and commitment working with youth in the area as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Case Manager for Harnett County.

Learn about 4-H Summer Programs

Registration is now open for the Harnett County 4-H 2015 Summer Fun Program. Day camps and workshops are open to all



Harnett County youth, 5-18 years of age. You do not have to be a 4-H member to participate. Activities are designed to be fun-filled and educational. If you want to get a taste of 4-H, the Summer Fun Program is the perfect place to start. Classes include building an electric desk lamp, launching model rockets, fishing, quilting, cooking and more.

For more information on the 2015 Summer Fun Program and other Harnett County 4-H programs, go to <http://harnett.ces.ncsu.edu/categories/4-h-youth-development/>.

Commissioners Honor Outgoing Campbell President Dr. Jerry Wallace

The Harnett County Board of Commissioners recognized outgoing Campbell University President Dr. Jerry M. Wallace during their June 1 commissioners meeting.

Commissioners Chairman Jim Burgin presented Dr. Wallace with a resolution from the board honoring Dr. Wallace for his years of service to Harnett County as President of Campbell University and proclaimed June 1, 2015, as Jerry M. Wallace Day in Harnett County.

Dr. Wallace said he was grateful for the honor and for Harnett County's support of Campbell over the years.

"I love Harnett County," he said, "and I am very grateful for the privilege of sharing in the life of this county for so many years and working with each of you."

He recounted how, when Campbell was looking to build the first new medical school in North Carolina in 30 years, the university was pushed to locate the school in Raleigh of Fayetteville.

"We said, 'No, it needs to be in Harnett County. It needs to be born in the region it's going to serve,'" he said.

He said he was moved by the significant contribution the citizens of Harnett County pledged to help build the Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Buies Creek.

"I believe the best is yet to be for this good county," he said.

Dr. Wallace was also presented with The Old North State Award from Hope Williams, president of North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities, on behalf of Governor Pat McCrory.

Copies of Monday's edition of The Daily Record, which included a front page story proclaiming it Jerry M. Wallace Day in Harnett County, were also distributed with Dr. Wallace signing numerous copies for county commissioners and staff.

