



NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM AT PINE KNOLL SHORES
1 Roosevelt Blvd., Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512 • (252) 247-4003 • Fax: (252) 247-0663
www.ncaquariums.com

Release: Immediate
Date: (6-29-18)

Contact: Danielle Bolton
Public Relations Coordinator
danielle.bolton@ncaquariums.com

Shannon Kemp
Public Relations Assistant
shannon.kemp@ncaquariums.com

Rare Butterfly Calls NC Coast Home

PINE KNOLL SHORES, N.C. – A butterfly in many cultures is often considered representation of change, hope, and life, however spotting a crystal skipper is even more of a treat. The rare butterfly is solely found along a little more than 12 miles of the North Carolina Coast in its Southern Outer Banks from Bear Island in Swansboro to Fort Macon in Atlantic Beach. With a range of roughly a mile, the crystal skipper is experiencing difficulties traveling due to urban development, however researchers say there is hope for this hidden jewel.

Considered average for its size, the crystal skipper is brown with white speckles on its wings.

“Indeed, if the average beachgoer were to see the skipper while traipsing around in its natural habitat, beach dunes, they would likely pass it off as ‘just another butterfly,’” said Ian Grace, a post-undergraduate intern with the Center for Marine Sciences and Technology and Kellogg Biological Station. “The skipper is far removed from the average butterfly. In fact, the crystal skipper is new to science, having been identified as a new species in 2015.”

In the beginning.



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
• ROY COOPER, GOVERNOR • SUSI H. HAMILTON, SECRETARY • DAVID R. GRIFFIN, DIVISION DIRECTOR •

ACCREDITED BY THE
**ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS**



NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM AT PINE KNOLL SHORES
1 Roosevelt Blvd., Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512 • (252) 247-4003 • Fax: (252) 247-0663
www.ncaquariums.com

In 2010, a North Carolina State University student, Allison Leidner, conducted a study of crystal skippers in three areas along the coast. It was estimated that there were 10,000 skippers condensed to these areas — Bear Island with roughly 5,000, Bouge Banks with about 2,000 and 3,000 skippers found at Fort Macon State Park.

Leidner determined the most critical component of the skipper’s habitat to be its larval host plant, seaside little bluestem; its caterpillar life stage depends on this plant for food and shelter. The little bluestem is a hardy plant that grows between the first and third ocean-side dune lines and in dune meadows. This habitat normally exists as a thin, horizontal band of vegetated dunes along the beach.

“Having a high percentage of seaside little bluestem is crucial in a healthy skipper habitat, however it and other native plants are often removed when urban development occurs,” said Grace, who has joined the Crystal Skipper Research Team. Additionally, Grace explained that “Habitat connectivity is mainly dependent on the presence and coverage of seaside little bluestems across a given area, as well as, food sources like morning glory and yellow thistle.”

Today’s research.

Building on Leidner’s initial study, the Crystal Skipper Research Team, an interdisciplinary research team, conducts various skipper conservation projects, particularly skipper population monitoring and vegetation.

In 2018, the team identified the best and worst skipper habitats in Bogue Banks and compared them to habitats in state parks. The project was conducted by individuals from North Carolina State



NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM AT PINE KNOLL SHORES
1 Roosevelt Blvd., Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512 • (252) 247-4003 • Fax: (252) 247-0663
www.ncaquariums.com

University's Center for Marine Science and Technology, North Carolina Aquariums, Michigan State University, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project used vegetation surveys to measure cover of seaside little bluestems at eight sites.

On average the state parks had 40 to 50 percent seaside little bluestem coverage compared to 15 to 35 percent in Bogue Banks. Sites adjacent to developed land possessed the lowest percent cover.

What is being done.

Carol Price, North Carolina Aquariums conservation coordinator and several interns with the team have designed planting projects to help rebuild habitat areas. Additionally, Jeannie Kraus, Carteret County master gardener coordinator has gathered Aquariums volunteers and other master gardeners for seaside little bluestem planting days.

As of June 2018, over 1,000 bluestems have been planted in low-cover sites.

“This work will continue until the mission to fully restore the crystal skipper habitat is complete,” said Grace. “It is important to focus efforts on building stepping stones for the crystal skipper by involving the local community in the conservation of ‘their’ butterfly.”

Locals can get involved by planting these seaside little bluestems, morning glories, and yellow thistles in their yards.

For more information about this and many other conservation efforts, please visit www.ncaquariums.com/conservation.



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
• ROY COOPER, GOVERNOR • SUSI H. HAMILTON, SECRETARY • DAVID R. GRIFFIN, DIVISION DIRECTOR •





NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM AT PINE KNOLL SHORES
1 Roosevelt Blvd., Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512 • (252) 247-4003 • Fax: (252) 247-0663
www.ncaquariums.com

Photos available upon request.

The North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores is five miles west of Atlantic Beach at 1 Roosevelt Blvd., Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512. The Aquarium is open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily. For more information, see www.ncaquariums.com/pine-knoll-shores or call 252-247-4003.

About the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call (919) 807-7300 or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

###



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
• ROY COOPER, GOVERNOR • SUSI H. HAMILTON, SECRETARY • DAVID R. GRIFFIN, DIVISION DIRECTOR •

ACCREDITED BY THE
**ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS**