



**FRIDAY**  
Clear  
43/25



**SATURDAY**  
Clear  
50/27



**SUNDAY**  
Clear  
58/34

# C THE CARRBORO CITIZEN



Roy's got a team  
See page 8



The open fields of Mason Farm make an impressive backdrop for close-up details like a mantis egg case on sweetgum.  
PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

## FLORA BY KEN MOORE

### In the footsteps of John Terres

How well I remember naturalist John Terres' last visit to his beloved Mason Farm, back in 1981. During that visit, he led a walk for a group of devotees of *From Laurel Hill to Siler's Bog*, his collection of stories covering six years of daily visits and observations in the fields and forests of the university's Mason Farm property across Morgan Creek from Finley Golf Course.

John described his first visit: "I first saw the Mason Farm ... in February 1961.... Crossing Morgan Creek over a concrete dam, I walked under the winter sun on a road that led over a grass-grown levee, built to hold back the spring floods. I had no thought of what might lie beyond. When I reached the top of the dike, I gasped. For two miles straightaway, and from east to west, windswept fields and woods lay under an enormous vault of blue. A thousand acres of swamps and fields and forest, to as far as I could see, were suddenly opened before me – a vast freedom of land and sky...This was a wilderness of the land to match a wilderness of the heart."

Were he alive today, John would be as thrilled with Mason Farm as he was on that first day.

He would wisely reflect on the many changes across that former far-as-the-eye-could-see landscape. That first view

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## Board reviews 'diet' for Main Street

BY KIRK ROSS  
Staff Writer

**CARRBORO** – Carrboro is considering a plan to slim down West Main Street along the road's four-lane stretch near Town Hall, adding bike lanes and dropping the number of travel lanes for cars from four to two, plus a turning lane. The move could make the street far safer without leading to traffic backups, according to a plan reviewed during a Tuesday night work session of the Carrboro Board of Aldermen at Town Hall.

The proposal is a variation of previous concepts in the town's Vision 2020 plan and other transportation studies for what to do with the wide, four-lane stretch of West Main Street between Weaver Street and Hillsborough Road. The design calls for restriping the street to reduce the four-lane cross-section to two travel lanes and a center turn lane and bike lanes on each side of the street.

The town's Transportation Advisory Board asked the board of aldermen to present the idea to the state

Department of Transportation to see if the state will help pick up the tab for the new road markings.

Board member Jacquie Gist said she thinks the idea is worth pursuing, especially since the design has the backing of both the town's transportation board and the UNC-based Highway Safety Research Center. In addition to providing for more bikes and slowing traffic, it could make getting across West Main Street easier.

SEE **ALDERMEN** PAGE 7

### The Bottle Cap Chain



Carrboro resident Susan Tice-Lewis stands beside her 100-plus-foot-long sculpture, The Bottle Chain, comprised of more than 15,000 bottle caps, during last Saturday evening's opening of LIGHT Art+Design, a curated design shop at Greenbridge.

PHOTO BY BARBARA TYROLER

## Citizen panel decides fate of workers

BY TAYLOR SISK  
Staff Writer

**CHAPEL HILL** –Kerry Bigelow, one of two former Town of Chapel Hill Public Works Department employees fired in October, appealed his termination before the town's Personnel Appeals Committee last Thursday night. At the hearing, Bigelow's attorney, Al McSurely, maintained that his client was fired in retaliation for the grievances, alleging racial bias in job placements and promotions and unsafe working conditions, that Bigelow and his co-worker, Clyde Clark, had filed.

The town counters that the two men were fired for insubordination and

intimidating behavior toward residents along their waste-collection route.

Clark, who was fired at the same time and under the same charges as Bigelow, had his appeal heard by the committee on Wednesday night after *The Citizen* went to press. The five-member committee, comprised of Chapel Hill residents selected by the town council, has until Feb. 17 to advise Town Manager Roger Stancil whether Bigelow should be rehired, and until Feb. 23 for Clark. Stancil will make the final decision on both men.

The appeals hearings were held in a public forum at the men's request. On Thursday night, some 75 observers filled a conference room at the Chapel Hill Public Library,

with more looking on outside the door. Town legal adviser Tiffany Sneed and McSurely presented their cases in a milieu replete with the drama of a courtroom, though without the usual procedural restraints. Each side, said committee Chair Anita Badrock, would be given considerable latitude to present its case.

In an example of that latitude, Sneed's first witness telephoned in a prepared statement and was identified only by a pseudonym, "Ms. Johnson." The witness told of encounters with Bigelow and Clark in which she felt intimidated by the men.

SEE **WORKERS** PAGE 3

## Uncertain days for small mental health providers

BY TAYLOR SISK  
Staff Writer

With a new system for provisioning mental health care services now in effect – one in which most services that will be reimbursed by federal funds will be delivered by large, state-accredited providers – the question remains of what will happen to smaller providers.

It's a question that's vexing at least two local providers.

On Jan. 1, the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) introduced the new Critical Access Behavioral Health Agency (CABHA) designation, with the objective of consolidating mental health, developmental disabilities and substance-abuse pro-

grams within fewer, larger providers. Of more than 600 applicants for CABHA certification, 175 have been approved by the DHHS, including 25 serving Orange, Person and Caswell counties.

These agencies must provide comprehensive clinical assessment, medication management and outpatient therapy. Additionally, they must provide two services from a list that includes intensive in-home care, community support team, child and adolescent day treatment, psychosocial rehabilitation and substance-abuse outpatient treatment.

Karen Dunn, executive director of Club Nova in Carrboro, had no illusions of becoming CABHA certified. Club Nova operates under the club-

house model, primarily offering psychosocial rehabilitation, which helps individuals diagnosed with mental illness live better, more productive lives within their communities.

But the reimbursement rate for psychosocial rehabilitation services is only \$10.96 an hour, not enough for Club Nova to get by on. The club operates through a combination of funding from Medicaid, the state, the county, Carrboro, Chapel Hill, grants and private contributions.

Club Nova previously provided community support services, which complement psychosocial rehabilitation and reimburse at a higher rate. But now, under the new system, only CABHAs will be reimbursed by Medicaid for these services.

State Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, who represents Orange County, is concerned about Club Nova's future.

"Clubhouses provide such necessary services," Kinnaird said, "services that keep people out of emergency rooms and shelters and jails."

Those services, Dunn said, are some of the "most comprehensive services available for some of our most seriously disabled individuals living with these illnesses long term."

"We know that without these services, people will be back in the hospital a lot more," Dunn said. "And, already, people are waiting anywhere from a day to a week, languishing in ERs, waiting for a bed to open."

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### Library debate continues

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## A travel adventure – with birds

BY SUSAN DICKSON  
Staff Writer

When non-birdwatchers think of birding, they probably don't regard it as a competitive sport, but rather as an occasional hobby undertaken on casual walks through the woods. This past year, for local birder Chris Hitt, it became both.

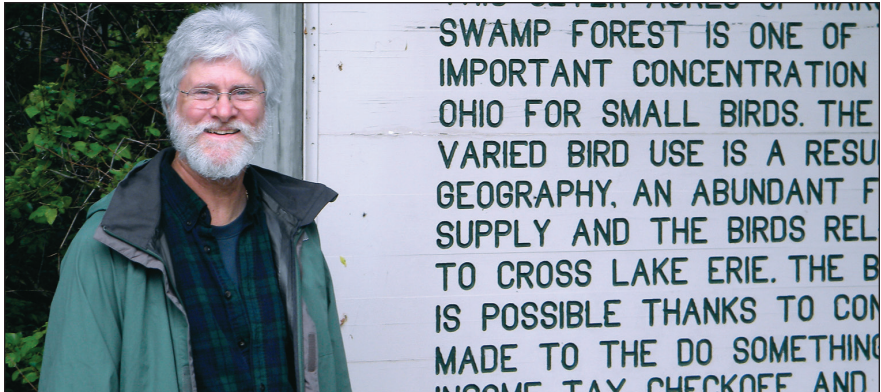
Given Hitt's "slow-birding" approach, it's a bit surprising what he was able to accomplish in 2010: He became the first person to see at least 700 different species of birds in the continental U.S. in a single year. His tally of 704 birds earned him a "Big

Year" title – an informal competition among birders to see the most species in a given area – for the lower 48 states, something he'd set out to do at the start of his year, but was unsure he'd accomplish.

"I kept having fun," he said, "so it ended up being a whole year."

When Hitt began the year, he chose a method he dubbed slow birding, attempting to see as many bird species as possible while also seeking out the best wood-fired pizzas and hamburgers in America, thoroughly enjoying his time and visiting with friends and family.

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Local birdwatcher Chris Hitt visited the Magee Marsh near Toledo, Ohio, one of his favorite places to bird in the U.S., last May. Hitt recently completed a "Big Year," in which he saw 704 different species of birds in the continental U.S.

PHOTO BY CKAY BRIGGS