

Keeping the May River Wild

Written by Editor
Thursday, 16 April 2009 01:48

Premiering in Beaufort on Friday, April 17th at ARTworks is Greg Smith's multimedia documentary, "Keeping the May River Wild," reflecting 25 years of living on, living in and photographing the May River marshes near Bluffton.



The documentary features interviews with concerned residents and officials, such as County Council chairman Weston Newton.

"It's multimedia, incorporating stills, video and separately-gathered audio concerning the wildlife of the May River. It includes portions of ten interviews with experts and stakeholders in the future of the May River," explained Smith. "In a sense, it's more than 20 years in the making, although most of the pictures come from the past five or six years, and the specific project dates back a couple years, with all interviews completed during the spring and summer of 2008."

Besides being a compilation of his images and learning about the May River, the documentary represents "the culmination of my effort to earn an advanced degree," Smith said. "This began officially back in 1983, when I was accepted (and attended for one year, with infant twins in tow) in Ohio University's journalism master's program. After a year I left for a job as a copy editor in Birmingham. I had hoped to complete a thesis long distance, but the lack of a good local communications research library combined with the needs of family and job thwarted my efforts. We moved to Bluffton just over a year later, fall 1985, to new jobs, building a house (with our own hands), starting two publications (one has become Hilton Head Monthly) and by early 1990, the birth of a third child."

At 49 years old, Smith became the second-oldest (by two months) graduate student in Ohio University's School of Visual Communication, taking an intense course in documentary photography, a course in Flash web design, an independent study course in visual newsroom management, examining the award-winning Roanoke Times. "I learned only the very basic outlines of video production with Final Cut Pro. With this knowledge and previous workshop training in video and multimedia, I set up my own production and editing system, and taught myself how to do what I did."

In the meantime, the human population of Bluffton was growing, homes and commercial spaces were sprawling, wildlife held on, and elected officials officiated— and now the documentary is ready to be unveiled on Friday, April 17, 7 p.m. at ARTworks, home of the Arts Council of Beaufort County in Beaufort Town Center; \$5. 379-2787, beaufortcountyarts.com and imediasmith.com