

An Ethnographic Study of the Lake Brandt Marina

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1 INTRODUCTION

The City of Greensboro operates parks at each of the three major lakes here: Lake Higgins, Lake Townsend, and Lake Brandt. I chose to study the activity at Lake Brandt because there is a diversity of available activity, there is easy access to the park, and because I enjoy being outside.

Lake Brandt is an artificial lake built in 1925 and named after a mayor named Leon Brandt. The park offers a fishing pier, a boat ramp, and rentals of kayaks, canoes, and jon boats. It is also the site of two trailheads: the Natty Greene Trail, which is for foot traffic only, and the Wild Turkey Trail, which is also open to bicycles.

The park is also home to the EcoBus, a converted bus that contains educational exhibits and travels to programs in schools, recreation centers, and libraries to teach children about wildlife. The park staff create this programming, in addition to the other park events.

2 METHODOLOGY USED TO COLLECT DATA

2.1 FIELD NOTES:

For each of my visits to the marina, I recorded information about what I saw and heard, paying particular attention to the social interactions between people and the interactions between people and the natural world. These notes are included in section 5.

2.2 INTERVIEW:

I conducted an open-ended interview with Neil Thompson, a full-time park employee. I chose him because he has daily interaction with park guests, and he's been working there for a long time. I thought it would be interesting to find out what he sees happening at Lake Brandt. The interview transcription is included in section 7.

2.3 PHOTOGRAPHS:

I also took photographs of the various elements of the marina park. These photos are located in section 8.

3 INITIAL OBSERVATION

Because I located this field site late in the semester, my initial observation was conducted at another site: Scuppernong Books, which is an independent bookstore in downtown Greensboro.

Field Site Observation: Scuppernong Books, February 11, 2014

Shortly after lunch I parked downtown and walked the crunchy sidewalk to Scuppernong Books on South Elm Street. I wandered inside and breathed in the smells of boxes and warm books, such a lovely contrast to the cold air and hustle bustle of a city preparing for an impending snowstorm. Stepping in a few steps to take in the layout, I looked down the long rectangle of the shop. It definitely did not feel like a store—a place focused on selling, selling, selling. This was a bookshop, with natural colors, a wooden floor, and places to sit and linger. Designed for people to come inside and stay for a while, Scuppernong offers refuge to bibliophiles as well as folks who'd just like to sit and have a cup of coffee with a friend.

I'm greeted by a woman working behind the checkout counter. She's medium height, dressed all in black with a red scarf and a white knit hat that has straight dark hair poking out around the edges. She changes the vinyl record on the record player—yes, an actual record player with the crackly sounds. There is a crate next to the record player that holds the store's selection. After this task, she flits off into the store to put books places. Focused on her tasks, she's a friendly presence in the shop.

Across from the checkout counter is a coffee and wine bar. Centered between the two is a pair of round tables, each with four chairs. The table closest to the front door is empty, and the other one is where a group of women are sitting. There are four of them, and they are dressed professionally: suits, skirts, manicured nails and styled hair. If I had to guess I'd say that they were there for a late lunch. They were deeply involved in their conversation, not worried about how loud their voices were or whether anyone might be able to hear their gossip. Seeming to

be in their 40s, they talked about family dynamics and plans for something. Consulting their phones, tapping their glossy nails, they'd say things like, "We may need to go further out if we're planning to do that."

Then one woman says, "Are you hungry? Want to get some food?" She is wearing a cream colored jacket and beige scarf, and she steps over to the bar to talk to the man there. He is in his mid-fifties, with bushy frizzy gray hair and a longish round beard. In jeans and a blue and white striped shirt, he's a casual, friendly guy. Up on the wall behind the bar is a large chalkboard with the food menu, and he tells her about some of the items. He describes something made with butternut squash that sounds good.

Leaving this area to move through the store, I wind around the tables in the middle and scan the shelves on the left side of the wall. Everything in the store is hand-labeled. Shelves have small labels taped on them, and on the walls above the shelves are the broader genre labels in narrow wooden frames. Stationery, children's section, local authors, fiction ... I pick up a book here and there, coming to linger at the nature and travel section. From here, I can pick through the different Wendell Berry titles while listening to a conversation happening on the other side of a tall bookshelf.

It sounds like a store meeting. I'm listening to female voices talking about ordering patterns. "If you order 3 one week, and they all sell, then you'll want to order more the next week. But not too many, because we've all noticed how quickly the patterns can shift." That sort of conversation. The dialogue is friendly, cooperative, and professional as they seem to be trying to iron out some wrinkles in their process and work the ordering process around their individual schedules. One woman in particular is directing the conversation, but throughout the back-and-forth between her and the other employees, there is definitely a sense of egalitarianism. She shows them that she values their time and opinions, "What day of the week, then, would be the best day for us to target this big order?"

I inch my way down the right wall, past the tall bookshelf and give a sidelong glance at the couch on the other side. There are three women, and the one on the couch has a brown pixie cut that seems to match perfectly her voice. Everyone in the shop seems to be doing their own thing, going about their business, and I have a hard time looking at people long enough to get good details on what they look like or what they're wearing. I don't want to stare. I work my way through the used books, and I notice that in addition to the comfortable grouping of couch and upholstered chairs, there is a larger rectangular table, a good size for a group to meet and work. There's a window facing the back alley, and another table with a box of books on it.

At this point, I feel as though I should buy something. I had in mind that I needed to find a birthday card for my daughter, but in lingering over the Wendell Berry books, I felt drawn back. So, I head back towards the front of the store. I spin a display of birthday cards and find something absolutely perfect. The women at the round table are still there, and I notice that they have plates of food. They are laughing and talking, and I wander back to the nature shelf. Here and there in the nooks and crannies of the back half of the store are single chairs, spaced out so that shoppers can sit and scan through a book. I'm feeling warm, having been inside with my coat and scarf on, carrying my purse and ready to shift into the next phase of my plan. But first, I had to look over all the Wendell Berry books and decide which one to get. I set down the birthday card I'd selected and pull off my scarf. Swinging my purse down to the floor, I squat and pull books out, scan the table of contents, the reviews, the dates, and narrow down a selection to two books. I sit in one of the random chairs and compare the two books, and while I'm sitting there another customer comes in and sits at the bar. He's young, in his twenties, and wearing jeans and a worn black leather jacket. He's got the black hipster glasses and a faded red hoodie underneath the leather.

Eventually I choose a book: *Life is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition*. Once I sit with my cup of tea, I'll want to read it instead of writing notes. With my shopping done, I head to the cash register, squeezing past one of the women who is seated and bumping her shoulder with my bag by mistake. She doesn't appear to notice, so I move on. There is all kind of

Scuppernong paraphernalia for sale: t-shirts, tote bags, etc. The man in the striped shirt comes over to the cash register to ring up the sale. While he's ringing it up, he notices I'm checking out an events flyer. "Feel free to take one if you'd like," then, "Do you want these in a bag?" followed by, "Please sign this copy," and "I'll just tuck this receipt in your book." While I'm checking out I can hear a loud shuffling upstairs that sounds like a roller derby. There's a pile of empty boxes by the door, and I wonder if they have boxes upstairs too.

Goodies in hand, I'm ready to relax a bit. I furlbe across to the bar and get set up. I hang my coat on the chair and fish out my notebook and pen. While I'm settling in, the shopkeeper appears behind the counter and asks what I'd like. He makes some sort of joke about his multiple functions, and I say, "Yeah, now you're *this* guy." Then I order a cup of green tea, which prompts his retrieval of a white laminated menu with a glorious selection of teas. Like the books in the store and the food items on the menu, the gloriousness of the selection is not in its quantity, but in the quality of the choices. Mango, pear, jasmine ... I choose the jasmine tea and he brings it over. He points to end of the counter towards the front of the store, "There's cream and sugar, if you need it, down there."

So with my bag unloaded and my pen in hand, I began to recall the journey through Scuppernong. Writing fast and furiously, I got a few pages jotted down before I noticed that the hipster guy with the red hoodie was sighing a lot. He had his phone out and was looking at something, and I'm sure he didn't realize how much noise he was making, as benign as it was. I try to get another look at the women who are still there. Even though they seem oblivious to me, I feel as though I don't want to stare long enough to describe them, but I take a few glances and manage to notice the giraffe print jacket and laptop in front of the woman with her back to the door. Two more men come in and stand at the door. They look like a father and son who have been out in the cold doing some sort of yard work or storm prep together. The older man takes off his hat and points over at the bar, and they sit at the other end and order coffee. If they're having a conversation, I can't hear it.

I can hear perfectly the hipster guy making his phone calls. He spends three or four minutes ordering beer, discussing kegs and bottles and inventory. He calls someone else to discuss whether they'll be open for St. Patrick's day and what adjustments that will mean for the beer, concluding the conversation with, "Okay fool, talk at you later." Then he leans down under the bar and pulls out something I can't see, calling over to the striped shirt guy. "This was in the bar. It's been jabbing me in the knee, thought you might want to sand it down or something." They discuss what seems to have been a big splinter, and they bond over the fact that they both work downtown in small businesses. Apparently, hipster guy works for a nearby restaurant. He says, "Hey man, there are some people who'd make a big deal of something like this, but I totally understand where you're coming from."

Following the splinter conversation, he wraps up his session at the bar and goes off into the books to browse. The two men and their coffee have since left, and the women are in the process of disbanding as well. One says, "Hey, do you have any cash for a tip?" and they all fish around in their purses. One says to the shopkeeper, "Do we leave our plates?" and he replies, "Yeah, I'll get them." The woman in the giraffe print stays behind, intently typing something important. The other women head out the door, continuing their conversation about what medications they're on and whether school will be closed the next day. The shopkeeper takes a moment to stand and survey the scene outside, his arms straight down and hands palm down on the bar. The noisy shuffling sounds upstairs reach a crescendo, and I can't help but ask, "What's upstairs?"

He responds, "Remodeling. They're putting in two apartments, but they say they'll be done by March. Hopefully they'll be done by March." I nod in agreement.

I decided to pack it in as well, and as I put my books and stuff in my purse and wrap up in my scarf and jacket, I count a total of five people in the store that are looking at books, besides the two workers, the laptop lady, and the hipster. Nice steady business for a Tuesday afternoon when everyone else is out buying bread and milk.

4 SETTING THE SCENE

5 FIELD NOTES

FIELD NOTES

Lake Brandt Marina

5.1 SUNDAY MARCH 2, 2014

It is a sunny day, windy, in the upper 60's.

2:20 pm

Main contact: Neal Thompson

609.605.7905

- Inside the office

Neal is not sitting still: there is a steady stream of activity as someone knocks on the door to ask about the price of minnows. "Two dollars for a dozen," he says, "I'll be right out, let me just get this guy taken care of." Then he checks out a boat to a man in a vest. He has chicken cooking "in the back" that he goes to check on before heading outside to pack up some minnows.

Neal comes back -- "I'll check with my coworkers, just let them know what you're going to be doing. But I doubt anyone will have a problem with it. How often do you think you'll be out here observing?"

I tell him that I'll be there maybe once or twice a week, aiming for a few hours in various spots. No problem. He says that there will be more activity when the weather gets warmer,

that when it's cold there's nothing really to see. So, I mention that I'd like to be able to hang out in the office a bit, see what they do in the off-season time. It's a pretty small office with two desks, but there is a bank of chairs and a large window that overlooks the slope leading down to the lake. He says that will be fine, so I feel pretty comfortable that I've gotten a good field site set up.

He's gone back to work on his chicken again, so I say goodbye and slip out with my notebook. Surveying the parking lot, I decide to park over on one of the picnic tables in the shelter over at the south end of the parking lot.

- From the picnic shelter, where there are four picnic tables and a trash can

2:30 pm

Next to the shelter there is a single picnic table a few yards from the edge of the lake. A pregnant couple is settled there. The woman heads off across the parking lot, presumably to use the restroom. The man takes pictures of the lake. He has a real camera, not just a phone.

A woman comes from the trail head off to my right and follows her dog over to the lake's edge. She has gray hair in a ponytail, she's wearing a blue fleece jacket, and the dog is a bulldog, I think, on a leash. The dog is interested in going in the water but isn't allowed.

I count 32 vehicles in the gravel parking lot. I know there are more up at the top of the driveway by the road, because I saw them when I arrived. There is also the large Ecobus and three travel trailers parked.

A couple of kayakers that have been out on the lake arrive over at the picnic table and pull their kayaks up on shore. They appear to be in their 50s: a woman with short hair and a pink sweatshirt, and a man with gray pants and a blue jacket.

Out on the lake a motorboat goes by. It looks like there are 3 people in it.

Off in the other direction on the bike path, there is lots of bike activity and hikers on the Natty Greene Trail. A young couple walks towards the trailhead -- a man in a green shirt and woman in pale peach.

Meanwhile, the kayakers are still regrouping from their time on the lake. They are changing their shoes, loading things in their car, the kayaks are still at the edge of the water.

2:40 pm 3 more cars have arrived

The pregnant couple leaves, and the kayak couple takes over the picnic table. They sit on the table with feet on the bench, drying out, stretching, talking. The man says, "Where was this wind when we were coming in?" and I hear her say something like "That's a really nice paddle ... that definitely felt good out there" I guess that they were testing out new equipment. She claps her shoes together, then says, "You need to try your compass sometime." I'm not sure if she's referring to a compass -- who would need one to navigate this lake? -- or whether maybe it is a brand name. "Yeah, when we're out at Lake McIntosh ..." The wind noise kept me from hearing all of the conversation.

Two guys on bikes come along off of the bike trail -- the Wild Turkey trail. They are both wearing black t-shirts.

From my notes, speaker unknown: "It didn't before we left when I was trying to move the ..."

2:41 pm another car arrives

An older burgandy Nissan, parks near the hiking trail

** I decide that I will need to draw a map and define the space so that I will have clear references for my notes next time.

A couple gets out of the Nissan -- in their late 50s. She is wearing a black track suit and white sneakers, he is in jeans and a brown button up jacket-shirt with a white t-shirt beneath it. He's older than she is, they hold hands walking from the car to the trail head.

I notice a black car parked by the lake -- it's been there for a little while with a couple inside. They've rolled down their windows.

The kayakers are now strapping the kayaks to the roof of their car. Working together to get them up there and attached.

A man in black shorts, black t-shirt, black shoes, comes from the trail, gets in a blue mini-cooper and leaves.

The kayakers finish loading and leave in their white Pontiac Vibe.

Now I can see a woman in a white minivan -- ponytail, blue fleece.

2:50 the couple in the black car still has their seatbelts on, I'm not sure if they are coming or going, but they finally leave. Then the woman in the minivan leaves too.

Over past a row of cars is a boy in a superman t-shirt and red cape with jeans. Maybe five years old? He's throwing sticks in the water, hauling a log, and having fun.

2:51 A couple comes out of the woods. In their 40's. The woman has a ponytail, jeans, blue sweater, and a big black dog on a leash. He has khakis and green short sleeves over a blue long sleeve shirt, and a small black dog on a leash.

The superman boy is squatting, throwing, talking ... there must be people with him that I can't see, but he's at the edge of the water playing with everything around him.

2:55 more cars arrive

White Ford: a young couple, in their 30s gets out. He is wearing shorts, she's wearing pants with a jacket tied around her waist.

White van: a group gets out. Two women, three children. One is a toddler getting strapped into a frame pack on one of the women, two older kids. One runs over to throw something away in the trash can near me in the shelter. They gear up and head into the woods.

The superman kid is still playing.

2:56 two more cars arrive

A big white SUV parks in the center of the parking lot. A tall man gets out: tall, fit, shorts, long sleeve shirt, no socks. Another guy appears, two pit bulls on leashes, a woman in red shorts. They are all in their 20s and super athletic looking.

Two bikers come from the trail and head down to the lake's edge to hang out at the picnic table where the kayakers were.

The shelter is shading me from the sun, and the wind is picking up, so I'm getting chilly and decide to head home.

Today's patterns:

Mostly white people, mainly in male/female couples

Mostly recreational activity, some seriously athletic, some just out to enjoy the day and area

5.2 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2014

Cold enough to be uncomfortable -- upper 50's and drizzling. Gray sky. Windy.

When I pull into the parking lot, Chuck is up at the top of the cement stairs that lead to the marina offices. He waves hello. He is such an accommodating host for this project, offering "There's some interesting pier traffic today" and pointing out at the fishing pier, where four people are there fishing.

I look around at the parking lot, noting that there is one white car over by the trail head, between the trail head and the lake, and there are five cars over at the marina end of the parking lot.

Chuck has an old cabinet he is tearing apart and putting into the trash can. He says he's getting ready to go work on the EcoBus, which sounds interesting to me. My daughter Stella worked on the EcoBus last summer, so a behind-the-scenes look at the prep involved would be fun.

I go in the office and look around--there is a large window covering the entire wall facing the lake, with a wide ledge. The big window ledge has a plant, a radio, binoculars, and a bird guide. At the right end of the ledge there's a white board with a to-do list, listing things related to the website and different office tasks. In front of the window is a telescope (I think) on a tripod. There are three chairs on the wall that matches the patio area. Two of them have boxes of t-shirts. On the wall opposite is a big poster with the Big Bass contest results, lists of people and the fish they caught. Next to that poster is a cinder block and lumber

shelving unit with the pamphlets, maps and ephemera on top, nature books and dog treats underneath. There is an HP printer/copy machine, and above the window is a framed panoramic photo and a round skylight in the ceiling.

The marina office is actually 2 buildings with a patio type area between them, and a big awning-type roof that forms a V hovering above the patio. Chuck is out there doing some work on the water fountain. I ask about the cage around the soda machines -- apparently there were issues with vandalism and people busting the machines to get coins out of them. Chuck goes into the office to mop, and I wander around outside. There is a cooler tank of minnows, the lid is open. There's a bench, the water cooler, and the offices on the other side. Just in front of the big window facing the lake, there is a stake holding up a freshly planted wisteria vine/shrub. It still has the tag on it.

The phone rings, and I hear Chuck say, "What's going on, I'm kinda busy" so I guess it's a personal phone call. I wander around behind the building, there's a flower bed back there with azaleas and irises. Nothing is blooming. A few lemon halves have been tossed back there too on the ground.

Chuck comes back and talks about how Elia calls and how chatty she is. Elia is his wife, and she is the most smooth and easy conversationalist I've ever met. He says he'll be in a meeting and she'll call and he'll say "I'm in a meeting" and she'll tell him to tell them to hold on a moment. We laugh. She's like that, and she pulls it off. Not many people could.

So, Chuck asks if I want to listen to some phone calls. He says he's working with Noble Academy to plan event, so he calls and puts it on speaker phone. He's puttering around tidying up while he waits for the person he needs to talk to, he's on hold for a while, then asks to talk to Vickie Payne, and gets her voice mail.

I ask about the people down on the pier, Chuck says they've been down there about 3 hours. I'm apprehensive about approaching them to ask questions. We'll see. Chuck says

that usually on rainy days like this there are people fishing that normally would be working outside, that it's an interesting crowd.

A white pickup truck pulls in. Chuck distracts me -- "Hey, you don't want a piece of wood, do you?" and I look at it, it's a wide flat piece of wood. "Hmm, it looks like it could be useful, but I don't have a ready purpose for it ..." "I'm gonna sling it." He's decisive, and he hurls it into the woods. "Put it right back into its environment"

He says he's going to get out the leaf blower and some ear plugs. I decide to wander off. I head down to the docks where there are some rowboats and a shed. The sidewalk there is covered with goose poo. The oar shed isn't such an interesting destination, there is a big sign that lists how many of each kind of fish you're allowed to take.

A couple arrives in a blue truck and walks up to the office. Chuck is out in the boat shed.

I decide to head out and talk to the fishing people. There are two hispanic men who have caught a pile of round white fish (crappy?) There are 23 fish. Later Chuck would say that you can take as many as you want of the round fish. So I ask the two men, "Do you come here often?" and cringe at the way it sounds like a pickup line. They say, "Sometimes" and I'm quick to add, "I'm a student doing some research here for a school project, looking at some of the things that happen around here." It's not incredibly articulate, but it works and they talk a little bit. I ask what kind of fish they have, and they say they don't know. It does look like enough to eat, though. They aren't there for sport, especially it seems if they are losing a day of work to the rain.

The other couple on the dock is a black couple who say they've only been there a little while and haven't caught anything yet. They have been to this fishing pier before, but this is their first time this year.

I notice that the white car over at the other end of the parking lot has a kayak on it now.

I run out of conversation at this point and decide to go back up to the office, where Chuck has put down his leaf blower and is inside getting a Hispanic couple (from the blue truck) a fishing license.

Chuck is speaking to them in Spanish, so I only pick up bits and pieces of the conversation. It sounds like the license is \$25 plus a fee. They are young, maybe their 20s, and it takes about ten minutes to get the info logged and for Chuck to answer their questions. They point at things outside, I have no idea what they are talking about. Types of fish, maybe the minnows? Hours, stuff like that. I think I hear the word catfish.

Out in front of the building, the forsythia bush has a few blooms getting ready to open. There is a post with bird feeders hanging from it, but they look like they need filling. Down by the pier there is a huge purple martin complex, with a park sign that describes the bird houses and the fact that the whole thing was donated by a family.

Chuck gets a heavy log book from a low desk drawer, saying “Oh my god, I’m not used to doing any business.” I guess these things aren’t used much over the winter, with the lower activity level, so I’m here in time to see the place open up for spring when more people are out and active.

The phone rings, Chuck says, “Lake Brandt, Neal speaking, may I help you?” “What I can do is put your name down. We have an event coming up on the 16th and I can call you if I have an opening. The 16th is not good ... they’re all full, but I’ll do another date and when we come up with another date I’ll give you a call ...”

There are two desks where Chuck is working. Above one is a lake photo and two fish mounted, facing the photo from either side. Above the other desk is a shelf that has two photos and a stuffed owl. Facing the desks, next to the door, is another white board that has a monthly task list and a schedule for Paddle Fest.

The fishing license couple leaves and Chuck goes back outside to his leaf blower. I poke around the office a bit more -- there is a back room with your standard fridge, coffee pot, toaster oven etc. I notice that the bookshelf near the desks has a machete stuck behind it with the handle sticking out. I suppose it would be a handy tool for all sorts of marina work, plus good defense, what with being in an isolated place.

I say goodbye to Chuck and head home. The hispanic men have packed up their fishing gear, and they are headed out also. Their green car takes a few tries to start, and when it does there is a belt squealing. They head down Air Harbor road and I go straight.

Today's patterns:

- Hispanic population more noticeable on a weekday than on the sunny Sunday afternoon
 - Practical activities over recreational--fishing for food as opposed to biking or hiking for fun or health
 - lower economic status with the fishing people
 - Mental note: compare weekend fishing to this rainy Wednesday fishing
-

5.3 THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2014

First day of spring and sunny, low 70s

3pm

Activity at the pier:

There is a man there with a motorboat he is getting out of the water. He's plenty chatty, white, middle aged. Says that today was a "waste of time" out there. It was too windy, he didn't catch any fish. Had been out there for a few hours. He asked me what I was doing there, and I told him I was doing an ethnography project to research the social scene there

at the marina. He said it sounded interesting, asked me where I go to school and said something along the lines of “You don’t have class today?” and I told him that my classes are in the evening, that I teach during the day. He asked where I teach, when I said “UNCG” he said his son teaches at GTCC. I asked what does he teach? Fire Science, nice conversation ensued about fire fighters and having heroes in the family -- his son is a Station Captain, my cousin Greg just made captain at his station up in RI, etc. The man then said he was going to go home and waste more time with a beer. Nice guy. Got his boat out of the water up onto his trailer and drove off.

I watched the lake for a while. 2 kayakers off in the distance, on the water, looked like they were headed in.

Black woman packing up her car. She had layers of skirts, sweaters, tights, lots of layers in the breeze. She had gotten out of the car and walked out to the pier and walked back with a cooler, carrying 2 fish. A black man had been out there and come back towards her car too, I’m not sure if they were together. I said hello to her and she was friendly, spoke with what sounded like a Jamaican accent. She had been out there since noon, they had been out there, hadn’t caught a thing. She said “they said the water isn’t warm enough yet” but that another guy had been out there since 9am and had caught a bunch of fish, he gave her/them 2 catfish.

I realized the music was coming from the Ecobus, went over there to talk to Chuck. He was remodeling some stuff inside, putting construction debris in the trash can. He had just built some cages with plexiglass doors that open from the top and swing down, for the animals to go in. He asked my opinion, I thought they looked fantastic. He went off into the shed to work on another piece of plexiglass, I wandered around.

A couple sat by the lake, so far the only recreational activity besides the kayakers. The kayakers were two young women, they brought the kayaks out and put them up on their car. They worked together and seemed to know what they were doing. The couple by the lake was involved in some sort of serious conversation, it looked like.

There was another woman who walked across the parking lot from hiking to office to shed. I have no idea what she was doing or why she was there. Not one of the city workers, dressed fairly sporty so maybe there for recreation. Dunno.

Back to Chuck -- talk about the EcoBus, introduced me to Mikey (a grown man named Mikey?) and we made arrangements for Stella to go help out on the EcoBus again this summer, and maybe even get involved in setting it up. On the bus, Chuck and Mikey looked at the new cabinets. Melissa Hoose, another parks and rec worker, came aboard to look at them and see how Chuck was doing. She seemed higher in the hierarchy, her opinion of the cabinets: "They'll do for now" -- she seemed to be someone that Chuck reported to. I had met her through another project, so I re-introduced myself and told her about my project and that I was trying to blend in. I swept the bus. Then I went home.

5.4 SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2014

It's such a cold windy day that I don't even want to get out of my car. So I don't. Apparently, no one wants to be out here in this wind. There's no one fishing on the pier, 2 cars over at the trailhead, and one guy packing up his boat. The water is so choppy and there are big waves.

One family is on the lakeshore, they walk over to the piers then leave. A Hispanic family, girls in dresses flying in the wind, sweatshirts and hoods.

The park workers are staying in their office, a good day to get some desk work done. There are spring events coming up: Fishing tournaments and the Paddle Fest.

5.5 SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2014

Today was again chilly and overcast.

11 am

There was no one at the fishing pier, but there was a row of big trucks and SUVs with trailers that indicated that quite a few boats were out on the lake.

At the picnic table over towards the docks, there was a guy in shorts and hoodie reading. He was very focused on his reading. First time I've seen someone here reading, especially unusual given the uncomfortable weather.

There are a few hikers, a few bikers, some happy dogs that have been in the water.

I did see a guy with a kayak and 3 fishing poles, which I think is the limit. I've never seen someone fish from a kayak. Or maybe I've never been looking.

The purple martins are active, and I wonder if maybe the babies have hatched. The adults are flying across the lake nonstop to gather food and bring it back. Out and back, out and back. I watch them for about ten minutes, it's a soothing pattern to watch. They are a type of swallow, and when they fly off far they look a lot like bats, but with a smoother flight pattern. Bats make sudden side movements and have a jerky pattern to their flight.

I head up to the office to ask some questions and meet a new worker named Matthew. He's geared up in some sort of sportsy pants and sandals, or shoes with toes, I don't really remember, but he's got the action-adventure vibe. He tells me some things:

- He's not the person to ask about the purple martins, Michael is. I think he's referring to "Mikey" -- maybe I'm not the only one who can't bring myself to call a grown man "Mikey"?

- The reason why people aren't out fishing is a combination of (a) it not being such a nice day to be outside and (b) the fish are harder to catch from the pier because they are swimmer deeper in the lake
- Most of the hardcore fishers go out in boats to get the fish out in the deeper parts.
- My observation: there is an element of economic privilege in boat ownership. It takes both the money for a boat and the means to store and transport it. Most all of the people that come to the lake with motorboats for fishing have a huge truck and a trailer, and they likely have space in their yard/driveway for storage, which implies home ownership
- Matthew acknowledged my observation and we talked a bit about the other options available for people who want to fish: some people buy an engine that they can bring and attach to a jon boat that they rent. That would be less expensive and easier to store and transport.
- Lake Townsend is actually where the best fishing is, the fish there are bigger. Lake Brandt is more popular with kayakers and canoes.
- Fishing licenses are through the NC Wildlife Commission, then people pay for pier access. \$2 per day or \$30 a year, but they don't sell many annual passes.
- There is a large bunch of white flowers in spectacular bloom in the flower bed behind the office, but when I look at it up close I realize it is fake. For a moment I fell for it, though, totally impressed with their magical gardening skills. Matthew mentions that it's a memorial. I wish I had asked him who for, but I felt too awkward. There's a certain dividing line between inquisitive and nosy, I haven't mastered that balance yet. It's best to stay on the safe side of things at this stage.

So, thoughts on what I might be interested in learning in the upcoming interview: the range of activity seems to be diverse and economically-driven. Of course, hiking is free and I've seen plenty of people just out for a walk. No special equipment.

Factors in what people decide to do out there:

- money

- motivation: exercise, food, pleasure, companionship
 - weather
-

5.6 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2014

Brief visit to the marina to get the interview with Chuck either complete or scheduled. I go into the office to see if he's working, and Melissa tells me that he should be back around 2pm, that he's out on the Ecobus.

The Ecobus goes out into the city for programming, and Chuck drives the bus and does part of the teaching, along with other Melissa (Melissa Coe, who runs the wildlife rehabilitation program).

So, I head out onto the pier because there are some people out there. All African American. There is a group of 2 women and a man. Then there's another man, he's older, and he says he's just been there a little while. He is on the straight part of the pier and he's already caught a catfish.

Out on the bigger deck area, the other man is sitting on an upside down bucket with a blanket over his legs to keep them warm (he's wearing shorts). It is supposed to be a warm day, but it's only 11:00 am and it's a tad chilly, but hints of getting warm.

All of these people are friendly and no one seems to mind or wonder why I'm just hanging out. They are all friendly with each other, and I ask at one point whether they came together as a group, but no, the older man they didn't know until he got there.

They are all using night crawlers for bait, trying to catch catfish.

The women haven't caught anything, and the man they're with doesn't seem too motivated, but he's in a good mood. He sits on the bucket the whole time. The women have their poles set up and are checking on things, baiting hooks, recasting, and active. The older man has 3 poles set up next to me, and he reels in two catches while I'm there. Both times one of the women has noticed his line and said "You've got something"

As the weather warms up towards lunchtime, more cars pull into the parking lot. A couple is headed up to the marina office as I'm headed to my car. As I pull out of the parking lot I see them head for the pier.

There is a full row of big trucks/SUVs with boat trailers, to indicate that there are lots of people in boats out on the lake.

5.7 THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014

Since I missed Chuck yesterday and the impending interview needs to happen, I got to the marina early. He's expected back with the Ecobus around 1pm, so I get there around 12:30.

It's so sunny and warm that I lay down on a picnic table by the boat ramp and "snooze." I realize that with my eyes shut, I am paying lots of attention to sounds. The martins are noisy, busy feeding their babies. The waves are lapping up against the dock.

I can hear a bunch of action over by the boat shed -- there are people coming in with kayaks and more people heading back out. They talk to each other and work together to get all the boats where they need to be. Melissa is there to help, and I see her and the incoming

folks helping to get the outgoing folks launched. She walked back up to the office while the other two people put up the kayaks on their car.

Also, I listen to some guys getting a motorboat out of the water and up on the trailer. One guy stays in the boat while the other one goes to drive the truck, backing up to the boat ramp. They say things like “Just a little further” and “Straighten it out a bit”

After they leave, another guy comes along in his sparkly red motorboat. He leaves it moored and goes to get his truck. As he gets the truck in place and gets out to go drive the boat up, he noticed that I’m sitting up and looking around. He says, “I’m glad you woke up, I was afraid I’d wake you up with this.” Seems like a thoughtful thing to say. He’s kinda overweight, wearing camo pants and a hoodie. I guess out on the lake the wind is chillier?

The Ecobus comes back and parks. It is so big it has to circle around to come up and get parallel to the middle signage. Chuck gets off the bus, there’s another worker, a woman, and they are chattering away about things that need to happen. He’s got his lunch, and I know his schedule is tight, but I want to get the interview at least scheduled.

Meanwhile, there are some guys getting another boat up out of the water. Not over at the side docks, but by the kayak launch.

I go into the office and Chuck says hello, he’s sorry he hasn’t called back, he’s been slammed. I ask if he wants to schedule, he says, “Let’s just do this now. You ready to do it now?”

So the interview happens. There are silences as he eats his lunch, but for the most part he has a lot of good material. I tried hard not to add any new direction to it. Looking forward to transcribing.

Today’s pattern: COOPERATION

There is a lot of cooperation happening with the boats and the fishing and the park workers. Everyone is friendly and positive. Maybe it's the Vitamin D I soaked up during my nap, but I do think that the park is a great place. You don't see a whole lot in the way of conflict or suffering out there.

6 CONSENT FORM

7 INTERVIEW

Interview with Neil Thompson

April 10, 2014

Ivy: My question is this: Can you tell me about the range of social activity that you see here in the park?

Neil: Okay, well we get basically two types of social activity out here at this park. We have people that are interested in outdoor adventure, in the sense that you can come out here and run on the trails, hike, go boating, fishing, and then we also have a more passive group of people that just want to come out here and have a picnic and enjoy lunch. And those are the two kinds of people that I have.

The first one, which was the outdoor adventure type, has been increasing in size, while the other one has been decreasing in size, which is really interesting. When I first came out here, it was quite normal to see someone come out here and lay out on a blanket with a cooler, and come down with the family and have, you know, a lunch. You don't see that anymore.

Ivy: Why?

Neil: I don't know. I guess it's just the way society has shifted. Now what people do is they pull into the parking lot, they get out of the car, they tighten up their running shoes, they run down the trail, they run back, then they leave. Either that or they pull their bike off and they ... everything is excessive and fast now.

I guess leisure activity has changed. It's gone from laying out on a blanket, and getting tan, to riding a bicycle, running, or walking your dog on a trail. There's always ... it's really interesting, because it's more about ... I think it's more about how to get something done. You know what I mean? Like, I've got to walk the dog, so we got to Lake Brandt. So life has really shifted. For me, from what I see, in the fifteen years since I've been here, I see life has shifted from people

really going out and spending leisure time, and getting really quality mental and physical activity in, to more of, I've got to do this, I might as well be doing it at the lake because it's fun.

Ivy: And why do you think you're seeing increased traffic out on the pier?

Neil: Increased traffic?

Ivy: Well, you had mentioned it earlier in the outdoor adventure category ...

Neil: Well a lot of it is basically trails. As far as what I'm seeing, what you used to get was more of a passive kind of person, who would come out and enjoy lunch, go fishing, enjoy themselves. These days they're coming out to the pier to catch fish. If they don't catch fish immediately they leave. Or they're coming out to run the trail. They're not coming out here to really sit and enjoy the park as much.

It's really quite fascinating, but a lot of like, we've got quite a multicultural group of people here in Greensboro, and I'll get like a lot of people from India out here, and they tend to use the park in the passive way that I would have seen fifteen years ago. They'll bring their family out here, they'll have a barbecue, and enjoy the park for the entire day, maybe rent some kayaks, and just take time off. Is that making any sense?

Ivy: Oh, absolutely.

Neil: So that's what I've seen. I've seen a *huge* shift in that. I mean, people barely run without their cell phones any more. And very seldom do you see anyone ... sometimes when you walk the trail, if you go down there and you walk the trail, you will actually see people walking the trail with earplugs in, while they're running the trail. In that context, you might as well just be in a gymnasium, if you think about it. What you're doing is you're out in nature, and you're just extinguishing one of the senses.

Ivy: So you say you've been here for fifteen years ...

Neil: And I've seen huge shifts.

Ivy: When did you see that shift starting?

Neil: That just started just about when I got here. That whole idea of ... like we had one kayak a week out here, and now it's like ninety percent kayak. No trail riding at all.

Ivy: No trail riding?

Neil: No trail riding. It's all new. Well, a little bit, but now the trail's like the most popular thing.

Ivy: So ten years ago there was no trail riding.

Neil: Very little. You know what I mean? Occasionally people would ride the trail. And that might be partly because we introduced a new trail right here. This is the trail head for it. And yeah, it started about fifteen years ago and really took off about ten years ago, and now it's just in full swing.

And we're seeing it with our old-time fishing, motor-boat fishing is down, kayak fishing is up. That's a new trend. Paddle fishing.

Ivy: So is the kayak storage ...

Neil: That's all brand new. That's something we introduced about ten years ago.

Ivy: Was that something people were asking for?

Neil: No, we saw a trend. But yeah, they were kind of asking for it. Water sports, kayaking, water sports and paddle boards are the fastest growing sport--water sport--in the entire world right now.

Part of that is just because it's financially, people are financially capable of it, everybody can get there stuff, or come out and pay for stuff, it's not that expensive. It used to cost a lot of money to get on the water.

Ivy: And by less expensive, what do you mean?

Neil: You've got no ... you basically just buy a boat and a paddle, you get in your kayak and then you're gone. You can be ... you can go out in pretty rough conditions and you can get out. It's pretty quick. It's faster than a canoe. And you don't have to have a big trailer, like with a jon boat. It's simple. It's part of that whole thing, like the changing trend -- everything now is supposedly simplified. You know what I mean? You're not going to get anybody to haul around a boat anymore when they've got their cell phone ringing in both ears, you know what I mean? Everything's got to be simple.

And plus the whole movement, too, with kayaks, is that people really just don't like to pay. Because they don't think they should have to pay because they don't do *any* damage whatsoever, you know what I mean?

Ivy: So you've got these two groups: the action adventure, and then the passive. How often would you say you do see people come out and have a picnic?

Neil: Almost never. Saturdays and Sundays it's usually populations of Hispanics, Indians, or Yemenese. The last time I saw an American family -- I guess we're all Americans, but I mean, a family that has roots here in this country -- come out here and have a picnic, it's been quite a long time. And part of it might be the fact that the American family is shot. You know, second-generation Americans, they just don't come out here any more, as a family.

Ivy: So you're seeing cultural differences in the way that people use the park.

Neil: Yeah. It's family values. I think there used to be much stronger family values. It might be related to family values. It might be related to just time, but I think it's got something to do with family values. And that whole idea of people getting in their running shoes and running down the trail with earplugs in, it's all about me. That's what it's all about. You know, they're just trying to get in shape, and they think the trail is a good place to run, but they could just as easily be running through one of those mock computer programs. People are easily satiated these days, when it comes to outdoor activity.

Ivy: So which category would you see coming out and using the pier. How would you categorize that?

Neil: More lower-income, people who do really want to catch a fish. Or a dad and a kid coming out, and him introducing fishing to the kid.

Ivy: And what kind of fish are they looking for?

Neil: They're aiming for any fish they can catch, to be honest. That's one of the few groups that doesn't have a specific fish in mind. But, what they ... a lot of them are fishing for pan fish, because they're good to eat, and with everything they catch up here they take it home. The guys in the fifty thousand dollar boats are catch-and-release mostly. Or they're in it for bass. Sailboats the same way. Fisherman are coming out to just catch ... the specific sports people, only a few use our jon boats for the sports fishing. It's mostly people who want to catch and take home.

8 PHOTOGRAPHS

8.1 ADMINISTRATIVE



I've suggested that this sexist sign be changed to say: "STOP: All boaters and fishers must register at office. City of Greensboro"



The marina office sits up on the hill overlooking the lake, pier, and boat ramps.

8.2 EDUCATION



This was originally the Reading Railroad bus. The ECO Bus is most active in the late spring through early fall. In early April, displays were being set up and the bus was getting a good cleaning.



This is a nesting site for purple martins, donated by a Summerfield family. There is a sign that describes the species in great detail, and from that and my own observations, I decided that these busy parents must have nestlings in there.

8.3 FISHING



There are two types of people who come to fish: sports fishers who head out in boats, and the practical fishers who fish from the pier. Most people fishing from the pier are looking to catch fish to bring home and eat. As you can see from the row of trucks and trailers, boating involves more money, time, and storage space.

8.4 ACTION & ADVENTURE



Kayakers out enjoying a nice spring afternoon.



A few cars at the trailhead of the Natty Greene Trail, popular with hikers and people with dogs.

8.5 PASSIVE ENJOYMENT



Every once in a while, people come to simply sit by the lake.

9 CONCLUSION
