



# 2003 URE OMSS

Undergraduate Research Experience in Ocean, Marine and Space Science



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## Merchants Millpond Canoe Trip, 06/13/03

In conjunction with the Earth System Science Academy (ESSA), URE OMSS students took a canoe tour of Merchants Millpond State Park in the Great Dismal Swamp.

Merchants Millpond State Park, one of North Carolina's rarest ecological communities, is a unique mingling of coastal pond and southern swamp forest. A wide variety of plant and animal life offer an excellent natural experience. Towering bald cypress with massive trunks, tupelo gum trees draped in luxuriant Spanish moss, and Resurrection ferns dominate the 760 acre millpond. At its upper end lies Lassiter Swamp, an ecological wonderland containing remnants of an ancient bald cypress swamp, and the eerie "enchanted forest" of tupelo gum whose trunks and branches have been distorted into fantastic shapes by mistletoe. Included in this area are some of nature's beautiful tupelo gum and bald cypress trees with mistletoe and Spanish moss, beaver lodges, and a variety of wildlife for observation.

Merchants Millpond State Park 71 US Highway 158 East Gatesville NC 27938  
Phone: 357-1191 Fax: 357-0149 <http://www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/memi/home.html>

The weekend of June 13, 2003, was very scenic and outdoorsman-like. All three groups took a break from advance technology and experienced nature. Even though all groups have projects that involve "the great outdoors", these two trips were more hands on, and offered a different view of "everyday things." We participated in the Earth Science Academy session and went on a trip to a local swamp.

The swamp tour, and Earth Science session both served their purpose educationally and in other ways; however the field trip to the swamp was the highlight of the weekend. On Friday June 13, 2003 we visited Merchants Mill Pond State Park in Gatesville, NC. This park is home to a 760-acre millpond that is almost two centuries old. Merchant Millpond turns into Lassiter Swamp these bodies of water host a diverse array of animals and scenery.

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