

SPRING ISLAND TRUST
WINTER NEWSLETTER, 1993

1992 marked an exciting, productive year for the Spring Island Trust. Highlighting the year were these events: (1) completion of the Nature Lab, (2) publishing of our first Trust Newsletters, (3) continued work on comprehensive land management and landscaping plans, (4) a timber harvest at the Chechessee Nature Reserve, (5) beginning an owner education program on individual lots, (6) establishing two apiaries at Bonny Shore and Walker Landing, and (7) beginning conservation efforts on the Edwards Tabby Ruins.

With the assistance of wildlife consultants Robert Folk and Dr. Mike Dennis, the Trust continues to work with the Spring Island Company to evolve a meaningful land management plan. All these programs, we believe, are important to maintaining and enhancing our nature park philosophy. In 1992, following traditional land management techniques, Gordon Mobley successfully burned large portions of the northern and southern Nature Reserves to encourage a healthy, more diverse understory in the forest, and thereby provide a greater food source for wildlife. This same burning technique will take place in April and June of 1993.

A key to successful land management is compiling an accurate inventory of what currently exists. Naturalist Bruce Lampright has begun regular monitoring of wading birds, songbirds, and fox squirrels. Drift fences and pitfall traps are in place at Salamander Slough to collect and catalog reptiles and amphibians. Sites have been established to photograph flora on a regular basis from Pine Island to the Trillium Garden. A Green Tree Reservoir has been established in the hardwood wetlands that run from the Shrimp Pond south to Bridge Road to create a habitat for wood ducks. We now have 24 bluebird boxes, 3 screech owl/kestrel boxes, 10 wood duck boxes, 2 martin houses and 4 bat boxes in place. Approximately 200 deer were harvested this season to maintain a balanced deer herd. Joe Hamilton, biologist, S.C. Wildlife and Marine Resources Department, reports that Spring Island deer are as healthy as any he's ever seen on a sea island.

The creative mowing to accentuate existing ecosystems and natural formations along Bridge Road and Spring Island Drive has received high marks from visitors and owners (as has the seasonal mowing of the Live Oak Forest).

Johnny Taylor's summer and winter gardens provided the Walker House with an abundance of cabbage, squash, tomatoes, broccoli, fresh herbs, cauliflower, greens, and cantaloupes. Keeping the deer and raccoons out is no easy task.

Perhaps nothing in 1992 was more significant on Spring Island than the completion of the golf course. Consulting arborist Ken Knox was so "impressed with the sensitivity and consideration afforded the trees during construction as well as the mulching and fertilizing", that he is bringing Pat O'Brien, USGA Regional Director, down in February to write an article for the USGA magazine.

During the past year, a more aggressive approach has been taken toward environmental education programs, on and off the Island. The 13 visiting groups have ranged from local Audubon and garden clubs to school groups and senior citizen organizations. Fifteen outreach programs were conducted by Bruce in the Lowcountry and Savannah to environmental interest groups and elementary schools.

The Trust continues to have a great amount of coverage in the local and national media. Lampright recorded 10 "Earth Buddy" spots at a nearby radio station that are aired continuously from 6:00 a.m. to midnight daily. An even greater media campaign is planned for '93.

Spring Island's Trillium Garden was again manually cleared of undesirable shrubs this fall and the plants have responded beautifully. We have begun to study the site with sample transects to improve our understanding and management of the area. The first trillium blooms appeared just in time for Christmas - 3 weeks earlier than last season. Thousands of the ruby-red flowers are now blooming and dainty white bloodroot and green jack-in-the-pulpit are beginning to appear. Bell-shaped white snow drops have emerged around the Tabby Ruins and at the old cabin near the grain bins.

Our Bald Eagles are incubating 1 or 2 eggs in their nest on Big Neck. We'll know within the next few weeks whether the hatch is successful.

Conservation efforts, under the supervision of architectural historian Colin Brooker, have begun on the Edwards Tabby Ruins and should be completed by March. The doorways and windows are being capped with tabby and then framed, and all vertical walls will also be capped.

Tommy Baysden organized a History Day this fall. Several black men and women who had lived on Spring Island in the 1920's, 30's and 40's shared their experiences and presented us with a rich oral history of life on Spring Island before World War II.

The Visiting Artist Program provided us with exciting work from Mary Adams (watercolorist), Walter Greer (painter), Matt Christie (painter), West Fraser (painter), Jane Dillon (ceramist) and Doug Casebeer (ceramist).

A variety of environmental "experts" visited the Island in '92. Bob Franklin (Clemson) and Dale Soblo (Nature Conservancy) helped us with tree and plant inventories and management. Dr. Bruce Erickson (The Science Museum of Minnesota) studied our gator nests and dens. Dr. Curtis Gentry (Peace Corps) and Fred Peters (local beekeeper) helped us establish, maintain, and harvest honey from our new bee colonies. Dean Harrigal (S.C. Wildlife Department) studied our fox squirrel population and made recommendations. Our golf course ponds and existing ponds were studied by Dr. Jesse Chappell, (fisheries consultant) and Al Stokes (S.C. Wildlife Dept.) who made recommendations for developing a sport fishery and aquatic weed control program for the Island.

The next few months will be lovely with the first leaves of Spring covering the trees in a fresh, soft green. It's a wonderful time for walks in the Chechessee Nature Reserve (as we've named the northern preserve that stretches from Pine Island to Walker Landing) or an hour or two meandering the tidal creeks in a sea kayak. Come by and see what new biofacts Bruce has collected in the Nature Lab. We look forward to seeing you on your next visit, and to the continued sharing and exploring of this special place we call Spring Island.

Sincerely,

Betsy Chaffin
Executive Director

Bruce C. Lampright
Island Naturalist