

**SPRING ISLAND TRUST
SPRING NEWSLETTER, 1995**

O Thou with dewy locks, who lookest down
Through the clear windows of the morning, turn
Thine angel eyes upon our wester isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!
William Blake, *In Spring*

It's that time of year; we are surrounded by the color green in all of its various hues, shades, tints, tones and intensities. Wildflowers are in bloom, quail are pairing off, choruses of frogs fill the evening air; it is Spring in all its freshness and the Island is so beautiful you can almost taste it. What a glorious time of year!

Please note the SPRING NEWSLETTER and accompanying articles and updated information have been 3-hole punched to go into your SPRING ISLAND TRUST MEMBERS HANDBOOK: Handbook information includes:

- Revised: Table of Contents
- Article: Suburban Snakes
- Revised: Birds of Spring Island
- 1994 Drift Fence Inventory

Two pamphlets--"Low Impact Landscaping for Wildlife" and "Invite birds to your home" are also included to provide backyard naturalist information.

Our bluebirds--the harbingers of Spring in the Low Country--are now in the midst of their first clutch (nesting). Beverly Lundquist monitors the 50+ boxes weekly and tells us we have over 35 nests with 134 eggs. With 1 to 2 more clutches per nest likely, this season is going to be an amazing year for bluebirds. Total fledgling count last year was 180. Resident Paul Kinsey and Bruce recently assembled and erected 8 new "Peterson-style" nest boxes which appear to be the optimum design for bluebird nesting. At the end of the nesting season we'll let you know which type of nest box has been more successful.

In late February, two chicks were sighted in our eagle nest and were estimated to be 3 weeks of age. Between weeks 3 and 4 one of the eaglets died, cause unknown. State eagle biologist Charlotte Hope spent 3 full days observing the nest and the 2 adult eagles, hoping to see leg bands on them. No bands were seen but on one occasion she counted 1 adult, 1 subadult and 2 immatures, all near the nest! One very large eaglet can now be seen peering out of the nest. This youngster should fledge (leave the nest) in early May at around 12 weeks of age.

Another of Spring's first arrivals is the purple martin, one of America's most beloved birds. Largest of the swallows, the purple martin eats only flying insects and can consume over 2,000 mosquitoes a day. This is the only bird entirely dependent upon man for its housing needs (and a species we're attempting to attract). Native Americans set out

gourds to attract martins to their gardens to keep crows at bay. Apparently this early wildlife management effort worked so well the martins lost their instinct to nest in their original homes, vacated woodpecker cavities. Look for the gourd "condos" and apartment-style houses we've erected in open areas around the island. Once a house is accepted by martins, they will return faithfully year after year. Houses should be inspected regularly to remove unwanted nests from two exotic pest birds, the house sparrow and the European starling.

This is an exciting time of the year on the Island, so much happens so quickly. With so many species of trees, shrubs and other plants in bloom, there's a virtual visual overload of color. (Bruce has included a Naturalist Update from late March describing flowering plants).

Fields in both the Chechessee and Colleton Nature Preserves have crops of winter wheat, blooming red clover and sprouting partridge pea. The wheat and partridge pea yield valuable food for song birds, quail and other wildlife. Fallow areas have naturalized in flowering masses of red sorrel, blue flax and yellow mustard. As part of our Land Management Plan, Gordon Mobley has planted almost 300 wild plums in 4 fields that will provide wonderful cover and food for birds and lovely drifts of yellow and white blooms in the spring.

We've had a full repertoire of artists visit since the Winter Newsletter: watercolorist Marty Whaley Adams, painters Carol and Elaine Anthony, sculptor Pat Dougherty, painter Michael Karas, ceramist Ron Meyer and photographer Craig Stevens. "Fireside Chats" by the artists -- lecture/slide shows at the Walker House -- have been quite popular. Ten to twelve visual artists will participate in the Visiting Artist Program this year. The Spring Island Collection has certainly grown and is being displayed in the Walker House, the Golf House, the Yellow Cottage, the Tabby Cottage and Little Cottage I and II. Of special note are the Carol Anthony and Michael Karas landscape paintings that have recently been hung in the Walker House.

Over 1500 native plants have been introduced in the past year to accentuate the natural landscaping of Bridge Road including 100 common bald cypress, and masses of yaupon, wax myrtle, ink berry, beauty berry, saw palmetto, magnolia and sweet bay. The old oaks of the Edwards Oak Allee, the victims of many lightning strikes, have now been cabled for lightning protection.

Nancy Vista Harris, Course Superintendent of The Old Tabby Links, has begun the Spring Island Native Plant Nursery. Located in the Golf Maintenance complex, the nursery will house both previously purchased stock and plants collected from specific donar sites on the Island. She will be propagating yaupon, beauty berry, ink berry and pinxter azaleas as well as several ground covers: coral honey suckle, carolina yellow jessamine and dwarf blueberry. The nursery has a supply of cord grass available for purchase to members landscaping their homes. If you are interested in obtaining cord grass call Darlene Sherman at the Spring Island offices.

Speaking of Nancy and the golf course, 11 ponds on Old Tabby Links will soon be brimming with grass carp. Several earlier-stocked ponds lost some of their carp during the torrential rains of last October. These are now being restocked and others stocked for the first time to control the aquatic plants that are constantly multiplying. A total of 600 fish will be introduced into other water bodies including Rice Gate Pond and Twin Pipes Pond.

Butterfly & moth expert Steve Mix (Beaufort Butterfly Company) visited recently to help us with our ever-growing insect inventory lists. Steve and Bruce collected over 20 new Spring Island species. Of special note were two day-flying moths and several handsome spicebush and black swallowtails. Many large monarch butterflies were observed lazily fluttering through open fields-- these same butterflies had flown to central Mexico last fall and now have returned to mate and deposit eggs on local milkweeds.

A new Spring Island Trust project is the creation of a primitive campsite in the Chechessee Nature Preserve. "Little Neck Camp" is located adjacent to the Great Salt Pond in an open stand of pine and live oaks. Already in place is a new deep well with a hand pump. The Beehive Builders will construct three 10' X 10' tent pads and a composting toilet enclosed in a rustic outhouse this summer. Spring Island will act as outfitter to supply everything Members and their guests might need for a great wilderness experience: from cooking gear to tents and sleeping bags. By September, Little Neck Camp will be ready for Member use.

Interested in volunteering for a dolphin research study? In March, Cara Gubbin (University of Nevada at Reno) and her dolphin research team arrived to set up a 5 year study of local dolphin populations and acquire data on the demographics, social structure and behavioral ecology of free-ranging bottlenose dolphins in Port Royal and Calibogue Sounds. Three research trips are scheduled for 1995, including six week visit from June 15 to August 1, when dolphin numbers are at their highest. Please contact Bruce for further information.

In conclusion, there is clearly a lot going on with the Spring Island Trust, as our organization continues to evolve and expand it's range of services and activities. We are very grateful for all the compliments and encouragement we have received from Members in recent months. Thank You.

Sincerely,



Betsy Chaffin
Executive Director



Bruce C. Lampright
Island Naturalist

