

# Our Natural Environment

A Digital Guide to Wildlife in the Sea Pines Community



## Sea Pines

COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATES

Maps to assist in exploring the Sea Pines Community

[Sea Pines Community Road Map](#)

[Forest Preserve Map](#)

[Leisure Trail Map](#)

# Our Natural Environment

When Charles Fraser founded the Sea Pines Company in 1956, his quest was to figure out how to develop and improve the land for human enjoyment without disturbing the delicate balance between the environment and its inhabitants.

Landscape architect Hideo Sasaki created the master plan for Sea Pines and development began with extraordinary care, guarded by land-use covenants. Approximately one-fourth of the land was dedicated to open space, including the 605 acre Sea Pines Forest Preserve, a tract of land that was specifically set aside as part of the master plan to protect and conserve the natural beauty and wildlife habitants of Hilton Head Island.

*“Fraser’s brand was built on being green. The master plan for Sea Pines made preserving ecological integrity a priority, and Fraser later remarked that ‘one’s duty is to dress and keep the earth’ and to ‘protect it for the next generation and the next generation.’”* <http://edgeeffects.net/green-development/>

*This guide will help you learn to:*

*Develop awareness of your environment...*

Know the facts about the wildlife living in your environment.

*Appreciate your environment...*

Know how to share your natural habitat safely with the creatures within.

*Conserve your environment...*

Know how to live in your environment while maintaining its integrity for future generations.

*Sea Pines is a state designated Wildlife Sanctuary; it is illegal to harm any wildlife.*



## **The Sea Pines Security Department**

We need your assistance in remaining vigilant and alert about your surroundings. Be aware of your safety and the safety of others, if you see something, say something. The Sea Pines Security Department will assist with nuisance animal removal outside your home. We employ a full time Wildlife Officer to assist our Property Owners with these matters.

To report a nuisance animal and request removal assistance, contact the Sea Pines Security Department Dispatch phone line at 843.671.7170. Please note that the officers will not remove any animal that you have trapped yourself.



## Being safe is always being aware of your surroundings!

### General Awareness

We have chosen to make the beautiful community of Sea Pines our place to live, work, or visit. With this beautiful environment comes an extensive variety of landscape and wildlife, and with that landscape and wildlife comes the responsibility to always be aware of our surroundings.

- When walking near a body of water, always assume there is an alligator present; walk a safe distance from the water's edge.
- When ascending a hill, always assume there is an alligator sunning at its base; stay vigilant.
- When walking among trees, in the woods, always assume there is a snake under the log or pile of leaves; wear closed shoes; walk around logs.
- When trimming your shrubbery or weeding your flower bed, always assume a venomous spider may have spun its home in that bush or a snake is resting in the pine straw; invest in garden gloves, wear closed shoes.



### Some basic safety guidelines

- Don't feed wildlife.
- Admire wildlife from a safe distance. If you want a closer look, buy a pair of binoculars!
- Never come between a mother animal and her nest or her young.
- Keep your dog on a leash; never leave pets unattended.
- Never leave a pet's food or water dish outside and unattended.
- If you have bird feeders, be aware that other animals may be attracted to the scattered seed or to the birds that you are feeding.
- If you have a swimming pool in your yard, always look before you or your children enter the water. Remember, animals need water to drink; raccoons wet their food before eating; an alligator may have entered to cool off.
- Use a flashlight so you can see the ground at night in areas where venomous snakes might be present or alligators may be wandering.
- Keep your yard and home clear of clutter, it only attracts animals and provides shelter and nesting opportunities.
- Don't try to trap an animal yourself without a safe trap and a plan. (Sea Pines Security will **not** be responsible for removing any animal you have trapped yourself. Fur bearing animals cannot be relocated.)

### General first aid guidelines for animal incidents

- Wildlife can carry diseases and pests. Protect your family and pets from contracting these diseases by not coming in direct contact with wildlife.
- If you get an animal bite or scratch that breaks the skin, or infectious material such as saliva gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound, call a doctor.
- A bite or scratch on the face, hand or foot is particularly prone to infection and should be evaluated by a doctor as soon as possible.

*Note: See page 12 for First Aid for Snake Bites*

### Other situations that require your awareness

- Animals that get into your home or cars may chew through wires causing fire hazards.
- The size of the animal is not a true measure of the size space needed to enter your home; raccoons need only a 4-inch gap to enter a space; a bat entry can be as small as ¼ inch.

# Contact Information & Resources

## *Wildlife Information & Reporting*

Community Services Associates, Inc. (CSA) Administration Office...843.671.1343

Sea Pines Security Department Dispatch Phone Line.....843.671.7170

Beach Patrol .....843.785.3494

SC Dept. of Natural Resources (SCDNR).....1.800.922.5431

SC Dept. of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)

[Click here](#) for Wildlife Information

## *Medical*

Hilton Head Hospital.....843.681.6122

Emergency Assistance..... 911

My Doctor ..... \_\_\_\_\_

My Veterinarian ..... \_\_\_\_\_

## *Licensing*

Sea Pines Community Fishing License .....843.671.1343

SC State Fishing License ([www.dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html)) ..... 1.866.714.3611



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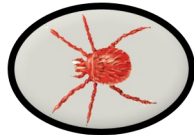
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# In and Around Our Homes



## RACCOONS

Raccoons can swim, climb trees, and run up to 15 mph. They are resourceful and can access the roofs of houses via overhanging tree branches or by climbing up downspouts.

Raccoons often use tree hollows for dens, but they also nest in brush piles, attics, sheds, culverts, crawl spaces under houses, and other protected places. They spend daytime hours dozing in their shelters, then emerge at night to forage for food.

Raccoons need only a 4-inch gap to enter a space. They learn that uncapped chimneys are good substitutes for traditional hollow trees used for denning sites. In extreme cases, raccoons may tear off shingles or fascia boards to gain access to an attic or wall space.

➡ *If you have a raccoon make it's home inside of yours, you need to have it removed as soon as possible before damage is done. Raccoons chew on electrical wires, rip up ducts, and chew on wood. There will be cleanup necessary after the animal is removed.*

➡ *If raccoons have entered your attic, you are most likely to hear them at night since raccoons are nocturnal. You will probably hear them when they leave after dusk and return during the night. If there are babies, you may hear them crying and whining.*

Raccoons have a wide-ranging diet, from insects and earthworms to fish, frogs, mollusks, crayfish, eggs, acorns, berries, garbage and carrion.

They use the five sensitive “fingers” on their paws to examine and manipulate objects. They’re clever and nimble enough to unscrew jars, open door latches, pull the corks out of bottles, and pry the top off your garbage cans.

➡ *Fasten the tops on your garbage cans as securely as possible. Clean them often.*

➡ *Don't leave your pet food outside, raccoons will find it.*

Raccoons are well-known for immersing objects in water, seeming to wash their food before eating it. However, biologists believe that this “dousing” behavior actually functions to moisten the front paws, increasing their tactile sensitivity.

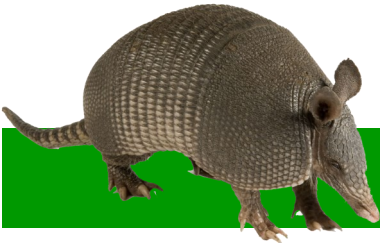
➡ *If you have a pool in your yard, you may see a raccoon using it for this purpose.*

➡ *Raccoons may look cute, but it's wise to keep your distance. Resist the temptation to feed them, and beware of fearless or sluggish raccoons that are out during the daytime. Raccoons can carry rabies, which can be transmitted via bites to humans, as well as to pets.*





# In and Around Our Homes



## ARMADILLOS



Armadillos are barrel-shaped animals covered with natural armor. An armadillo's armor is made up of overlapping plates covering their back, head, legs and tail.

Armadillos have pointy snouts and long, sticky tongues, similar to anteaters, which are close cousins. Their eyesight is poor, so they hunt with a highly developed sense of smell. They also have wiry hairs along their sides and belly that they use to feel their way around. Armadillos have strong legs and sharp claws for digging.



A single armadillo may have up to 15 burrows. Armadillos will dig burrows in close proximity to their foraging areas. In times of danger, they will run into the burrow. Armadillos prefer to come out at night because the temperatures are a bit cooler.



Armadillo



Anteater



Usually armadillos prefer sandy or loam soils that are loose and porous. This makes digging for food and creating burrows easier. They're often found in flower beds, yards and golf courses.

For many homeowners, armadillos have made themselves known by burrowing under the house where they rub their protective shells along the floorboards. This is a good indicator that you have an armadillo problem that needs to be addressed.

➡ *To get rid of armadillos, limit their primary food source - insects such as chinch bugs, grubs and mole crickets. Apply seasonal insecticides to control insect populations and they should move on down the road.*

➡ *You need to use extreme caution when handling armadillos. They have been known to carry leprosy. Researchers have proven through genetic testing that a certain strain of leprosy can be transmitted between humans and armadillos. Armadillos are thought to be the source of many of the cases of leprosy in the United States.*





# In and Around Our Homes



## SQUIRRELS

### *Gray Squirrels*

The Eastern Gray Squirrel has a bushy tail bordered with white hairs. Its body is gray on top and white underneath in the winter and a tawnier color in the summer. Its tail is used for balance when dashing between tree branches.

The gray squirrel can be found in residential areas as they forage for nuts, seeds, buds, and flowers of trees. Cover is important for bedding, nesting and protection from predators. Tree cavities are used as dens for litter raising and winter shelter. Leaf nests consisting of leaves and twigs are also utilized by gray squirrels, although litter survival has been reported to be higher in cavities.

Like other tree squirrels, the eastern gray squirrel plays an important role in what's known as seed dispersal. As winter approaches, squirrels carry their food and bury it in several locations. The buried seeds and nuts sprout and begin to grow in these locations the following spring.

### *Flying Squirrels*

In our area of the south, the most common species of flying squirrels is the southern flying squirrel. Their fur is grayish-brown, except for their underbelly, which is lighter. They have large black eyes that allow them to have excellent night vision. Flying squirrels are not aggressive, but they do have sharp teeth.

Flying squirrels don't actually fly as does the bat.\* These squirrels jump and then glide from tree to tree, or home to home--or home to tree, with the help of a specialized membrane found between their front and back legs.

People discover that flying squirrels have taken up residence inside their home by hearing them. The fact that they are nocturnal, means that at night homeowners can often hear chattering sounds, wrestling sounds, and the sounds of tiny feet scurrying in the attic, or behind walls. If flying squirrels are living in your home, you may see them gliding to and from your home on a regular basis.

The following steps can help you deter squirrels from choosing your home to inhabit:

- Inspect the exterior walls, siding, and foundation of your home; seal or repair cracks, crevices, or spaces.
- Caulk gaps found around windows and doors. Install door sweeps on all exterior doors.
- Place tight-fitting caps on your home's chimneys, and replace broken or missing roof shingles.
- Make sure that all vents leading into your home have tight-fitting covers placed over them.
- Trim trees away from your roof to make access more difficult for them.
- Remove bird feeders from your property that could act as a food source for them.



➡ *Squirrels are wild animals, they should be regarded as such.*

*\*See page 9 for explanation of Bat's ability to fly.*



# In and Around Our Homes



## BATS

Of all the mammals on Earth, bats are the only ones capable of true flight. They use elongated bones (similar to human fingers) and a thin wing membrane stretched between them.

Nearly all bats thrive on an insect diet. A single bat can eat up to 1,200 mosquito-sized insects every hour, and each bat usually eats 6,000 to 8,000 insects each night.

During the day bats sleep in trees, rock crevices, and buildings. Bats are nocturnal, leaving daytime roosts at dusk. Upon leaving their roost, bats fly to a stream, pond, or lake where they dip their lower jaw into the water while still in flight and take a drink.

Bats are generally shy and do not attack or show aggression unless they are handled or feel threatened.

Bats can gain entry to homes and attics through very small openings. Holes as small as ¼ inch can be a bat entry. Bats will also roost in the gable vents and soffits of homes. Some species of bats are protected in South Carolina and their removal is regulated by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Many bat species have been declining rapidly due to White-nose Syndrome. Researchers call the disease “white-nose syndrome” (WNS) because of the visible white fungal growth on infected bats’ muzzles and wings. This cold-loving fungus infects bats during hibernation when the bats reduce their metabolic rate and lower their body temperature to save energy over winter. Current evidence indicates that WNS is not transmissible from bats to humans. Studies have shown that the fungus grows only at cold temperatures that are much lower than that of the human body.

Bats do not directly spread the disease, but areas with large amounts of bat guano are prime locations for the fungus to grow. The spores can be spread in wind and/or be inhaled.

➡ *Enclosed buildings where bats have roosted are areas of particular concern.*



## ROOF RATS

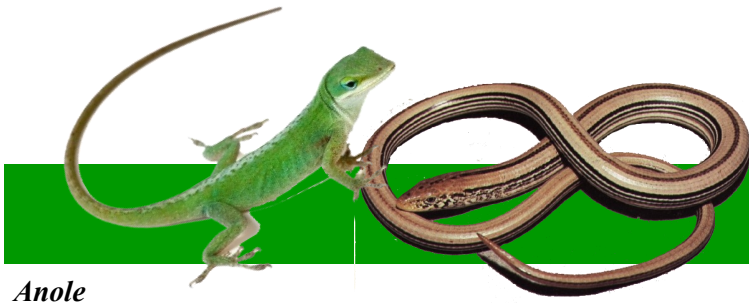
Typically living in colonies, roof rats prefer to nest in the upper parts of buildings such as attics and rafters. They can also be found in piles of wood or debris. They prefer sheltered or covered habitats and are attracted to lush landscapes, dense vegetation and fruit trees. As a result, properties with heavy shrubbery, woodpiles and storage boxes are more prone to roof rat infestations.

Seeking safety from predators and places to nest, roof rats enter garages, sheds and homes by following pipes or gnawing through materials such as drywall, aluminum siding, and wood. To prevent a roof rat infestation: seal up holes or cracks larger than a quarter with silicone caulk, be sure that all windows and vents are screened, keep trees and shrubs trimmed away from the building, clean up fruit that may fall from trees, keep garbage in tightly covered receptacles and store pet food in sealed containers. Additionally, eliminate any outdoor sources of water such as leaky sprinkler heads, pet water dishes and birdbaths.

*See page 28 for Marsh Rice Rat information.*



# In and Around Our Homes



## LIZARDS

### **Anole**

Anoles may be either green or brown depending on environmental conditions. Males have a pinkish throat fan that is displayed in territorial rivalries or when approaching a potential mate.

Anoles are active by day in warm weather and often bask in vegetation. During cool weather anoles can be found hiding under tree bark, shingles, or in rotten logs. Anoles are helpful to have around as they eat a wide variety of insects, spiders, and other invertebrates.

➡ *Anoles are harmless to humans other than startling you when they seemingly appear out of nowhere because of their ability to change color with their environment.*

### **Skinks**

Five-lined skinks are most often found beneath logs or under tree bark. Like many other lizards, five-lined skinks will break off their tails when restrained, distracting the predator and allowing the lizard to escape. They prey on ground beetles, wood roaches, caterpillars, spiders, grasshoppers, centipedes, etc.

Broadhead skinks are the largest skink in the southeast, ranging in length from 6-13 inches. These large lizards have short legs and a streamlined body generally gray, brown, or black, in background color with five white or yellowish stripes. Mature males develop enlarged orange heads with powerful jaws. Adult broadhead skinks can be seen high up in trees, while young are common on fallen trees and under bark. Broadhead skinks prey on insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. Their powerful jaws allow them to overpower virtually any invertebrate including an occasional lizard or small mammal.

Broadhead skinks will break off their tails when restrained, distracting the predator and allowing the lizard to escape.

➡ *Broad-headed skinks are completely non-venomous. They can give you a strong bite thanks to their broad, muscular heads.*

### **Eastern Glass Lizard**

The eastern glass lizard is a legless lizard often mistaken for a snake. Unlike snakes, they have movable eyelids and external ear openings. When restrained, eastern glass lizards often thrash and break off their tail. Once detached, tail fragments continue to writhe for several minutes, distracting predators. The tail later regrows. They are common in pine flatwoods, sand dunes, and other sandy habitats and are often found around wetlands.

Glass lizards typically eat arthropods and other invertebrates. They do not have flexible jaws like snakes and thus cannot consume prey items as large as snakes of similar size.

➡ *Glass lizards are nonvenomous and completely harmless to humans. The lizard may attempt to bite, but its jaws are usually not powerful enough to break or even bruise human skin, and the bite is rarely painful.*

### **Mediterranean Gecko**

Mediterranean geckos are almost completely nocturnal. They have sticky toe pads which allow them to perch on walls around outside lights where they wait to grab insects. By day, they hide in cracks and crevices. Unlike most lizards, geckos are capable of vocalizing, often making squeaking or barking noises in territorial disputes or to deter a predator.

➡ *These small geckos are non-venomous and not deadly to humans. Medium to large geckos (4-5 inches) may bite if distressed; however, their bite is gentle and will not pierce skin. (See image on page 39.)*





# In and Around Our Homes



## SNAKES

Coral Snake

Scarlet King Snake

### ***Coral Snake vs. Scarlet King Snake***

Coral snakes tend to be very small, thin, and mostly nocturnal. Adults are usually about two feet long and have bright red, yellow and black bands down the length of their body. These snakes are very secretive; they are spotted most frequently in loose, sandy soil.

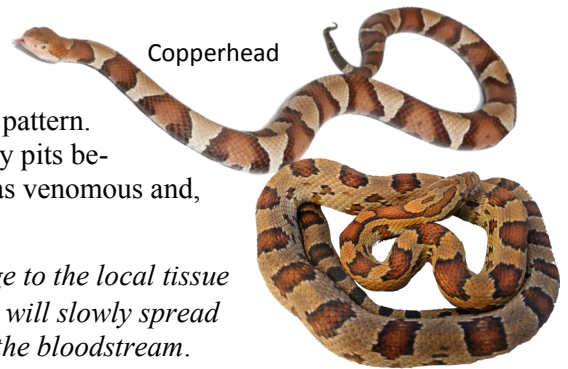
Coral snakes, though very rare in Sea Pines, are sometimes confused with harmless scarlet king snakes. The coral snake holds a very potent venom so you definitely want to learn how to tell a coral snake from a scarlet king snake. To remember the difference, memorize this rhyme: “Red touches yellow, kills a fellow” and “red touches black, venom lack.” Also, a coral snake’s nose is always black.

➡ *There is little or no pain or swelling at the site of the bite from a coral snake; other symptoms can be delayed for 12 hours. However, if untreated by antivenin, the neurotoxin begins to disrupt the connections between the brain and the muscles, causing slurred speech, double vision, and muscular paralysis, eventually ending in respiratory or cardiac failure.*

### ***Copperhead vs. Corn Snake***

The copperhead is the most common venomous snake found in Sea Pines. They’re easily recognized by their brown markings with an hour-glass shaped pattern. Like other pit vipers, copperheads have an arrow-shaped head and heat-sensory pits between each eye and nostril to track prey. Corn Snakes are often misidentified as venomous and, unfortunately, killed.

➡ *When bitten by a copperhead, their venom will cause severe damage to the local tissue and can cause serious, secondary infection. Pain at the site of the bite will slowly spread outward as the venom diffuses through your muscle tissue and enters the bloodstream.*



Copperhead

Corn Snake

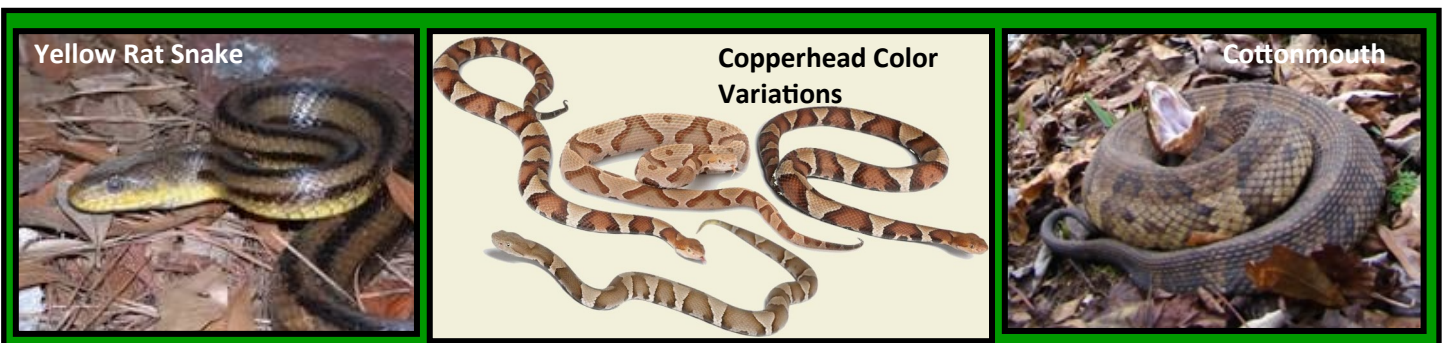
### ***Cottonmouth vs. Nerodia (Water Snakes)***

Cottonmouths, or water moccasins, are relatively large, often ranging from 2 to 4 feet long. They have large jowls, due to their venom glands, and cat-eye pupils. Cottonmouths have dark stripes by each nostril and pale snouts which can be helpful identifying features. Their large, triangular heads are distinct from their thinner necks, unlike many other snakes that have no distinctive neck.

Cottonmouths may be found swimming in swamps, marshes, drainage ditches and at the edges of ponds and streams. On land they’re found near water and fields. They like to sun themselves on branches, stones and logs near the water’s edge.

Unlike most other snakes, cottonmouths aren’t afraid to stand their ground when threatened. A cottonmouth will open up and show its white mouth, but will rarely bite unless stepped on, picked up or physically attacked.

➡ *The bite of a cottonmouth is much more dangerous to humans than the bite of the closely related copperhead, but rarely leads to death. Cottonmouth venom is composed mainly of hemotoxins that break down blood cells, preventing the blood from clotting or coagulating.*



Yellow Rat Snake

Copperhead Color Variations

Cottonmouth



Eastern Diamondback Rattle Snake

# In and Around Our Homes

## SNAKES

### **Water Snakes**

*Nerodia* is a class of nonvenomous snakes commonly referred to as water snakes. Because they are found in the same environment, they are often mistaken for the venomous cottonmouth.

If you are in doubt, ask yourself these questions when you happen upon a water snake:

1. Is the body slender or thick (Cottonmouth)?
2. Is the head shape thin and flat or triangular and blocky (Cottonmouth)?
3. Is the neck roughly the size of the head or narrower than the head (Cottonmouth)?
4. Are the eye pupils round or vertical (Cottonmouth)?

### **Yellow Rat Snake**

The most common rat snake in Sea Pines is the yellow rat snake. This variety is identifiable by four dark stripes running lengthwise down a greenish or yellowish body. These animals are non-venomous and generally harmless to humans, though they are a wild animal with teeth and can bite if threatened or cornered. Yellow rat snakes primarily eat rats and mice, so they are helpful to have around. They are also great climbers and will eat squirrels, birds and bird eggs at times.

### **Diamondback Rattlesnakes**

Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes are South Carolina's largest venomous snake. Adults are typically 3-5 feet long, but sometimes grow to more than 6 feet. They can weigh up to 10 pounds. Diamondbacks are named for the dark brown-to-black "diamond" pattern that runs along the snakes' backs. They also have distinctive "masks" of black coloring around their eyes. Their overall body color varies from light tan to dark olive.

Diamondbacks are normally found in maritime forests, in grassy sand dunes and along the edges of marsh and swamp. During the winter they'll burrow underground, but once the weather warms up, they become active.

### **Canebrake Rattlesnake (Timber Rattlesnake)**

Canebrakes typically reach 3-5 feet long. Canebrake rattlers come in a variety of colors, including pale shades of pink, orange and yellow, as well as tan. They have distinctive black, zig-zagging "chevron" bands running across the length of their bodies, and a rust or dark brown colored stripe running down their backs. Their tails are black.

### **Pigmy Rattlesnake**

As evidenced by its name, the pigmy rattlesnake is a small rattlesnake species that rarely reaches a foot in length, with two feet being its maximum size. Because they are so small, sometimes people cannot hear them rattle.

The Carolina pigmy rattler can be gray, tan, or lavender, while the dusky pigmy ranges from bluish gray to nearly black. Both subspecies have a row of well-defined black spots running along their backs down the length of their bodies.

Pigmy rattlers are found in numerous habitats, both near water and in dry areas.

➡ *Rattlesnakes use their rattle to warn others. They may rattle to indicate they are present so they won't be stepped on, or if cornered or harassed to warn that they may be about to strike.*

*Note: Rattlesnakes are not common in Sea Pines, but can occasionally be found in the area.*

### **First Aid for Snake Bites**

Should you be bitten by a snake, it's essential to get emergency treatment as quickly as possible. Here are some tips that you should keep in mind:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Note the time of the bite.
3. Keep calm and still as movement can cause the venom to travel more quickly through the body.
4. Remove constricting clothing or jewelry because the area surrounding the bite is likely to swell.
5. Don't allow the victim to walk. Carry or transport them by vehicle.
6. Do not kill or handle the snake. Take a picture if you can, but don't waste time hunting it down.
7. The most important thing to do for a snake bite is to get emergency medical help as soon as possible.



# In and Around Our Homes

## Brown Widow



## SPIDERS

### Black Widow

Female black widows are identified by the colored, hourglass-shaped mark on their abdomens. The males can be identified by various red markings on their abdomens.

The bite of a female black widow is thought to be 15 times more potent than that of a rattlesnake. A bite can cause severe muscle pain and spasms, as well as abdominal cramps, for up to a week.

➡ *Black widows have fangs, almost like miniature snakes. Soon after a black widow spider bites you - before any reaction starts - you might be able to see two small holes at the bite location.*

➡ *Antivenin may be used to treat patients who are experiencing a severe reaction. When administered properly by a licensed medical practitioner, it has been shown to be highly effective, especially if patients are treated within the first three hours after a bite.*

➡ *Your pet can be bitten by a black widow indoors or outside. Younger and older pets are at increased risk of fatal complications. If bitten by a black widow spider, your pets must receive medical treatment.*

### Brown Widow

The brown widow is a medium to large spider that is slightly smaller than its cousin, the black widow. It is usually either dark grey, brown, or black. There is a general striped pattern on the legs and dorsal (top) side, and brown mottling on the ventral (bottom) side. Like the black widow, it often has an hourglass figure on its abdomen. However, instead of this marking being red, it is usually a vivid orange or yellowish.

If you cannot identify this spider by its markings alone, another method is to look for its distinctive egg sac. The sac resembles a sandspur, having brown coloration and pointed projections on its surface.

The female brown widow is a venomous spider that injects a neurotoxic venom when it bites its prey. The males do not bite. The brown widow is more timid than the black widow and injects less venom.

➡ *The brown widow's venom is highly toxic to dogs; it may cause cramping, tremors, drooling or vomiting.*



Brown Widow  
Egg Sac

### Brown Recluse

This spider is about the size of a quarter, brown, mostly hairless, with a dark brown violin mark on its back. It is not interested in attacking humans, but will bite if it feels threatened.

➡ *The brown recluse venom can cause severe allergic reactions, notably in children, the elderly or those with preexisting medical conditions. It is important to keep an eye on the individual who was bitten.*

➡ *A brown recluse spider bite is necrotizing -- meaning the bite wound will ulcerate and cause destruction of surrounding soft tissue. Some pets show no symptoms from the bite of a brown recluse, but when symptoms are present, they often include several hours of intense pain at the site of the bite.*

Brown Widow



Black Widow



Brown Recluse





# In and Around Our Homes



## SPIDERS

### Bite Prevention

Typical outdoor habitats in which spiders are often found include wood and rock piles, rodent burrows, hollow tree stumps, outdoor furniture and flower pots.

In nature, most bites occur when reaching under an object that the spider inhabits.

➡ *While working in or around areas of suitable habitat for these spiders, wear gardening gloves to help prevent being bitten by a venomous spider.*



➡ *There have been many documented cases of bites in outdoor restrooms, so searching under toilet seats before using this type of facility may prevent a bite. (Tower Beach and Forest Preserve would be such locations in our community.)*



Typical indoor habitats in which spiders are often found include garages and crawl spaces. In indoor areas bites frequently occur when spiders are hiding in shoes that have not been worn recently or while searching through old boxes.

➡ *Shake out clothing and shoes that have been sitting in dark areas.*

➡ *Use gloves while working in areas where spiders may be found, such as garages.*



## FIRE ANTS

In Beaufort County, fire ants make a comeback every year after heavy rains. The underground colonies build mounds above ground to dry themselves out. They prefer open, cleared areas with direct sunlight, like lawns, golf courses and fields.

➡ *Fire ants are easy to control with bait products that homeowners can spread (or have an exterminator apply during regular pest control measures). The ants will carry the granular product deep into the nest to feed the rest of the colony. The method works best with fresh bait applied in the evening; it may take two to three weeks to work.*

Fire ants are aggressive and may attack when their nests are disturbed. The ants swarm humans and animals, and when one bites, an alarm pheromone is released that causes other ants to latch on with their jaws and rotate their backsides to sting and inject venom.

Most people have a mild reaction, including minor swelling and a burning sensation, while a small number can have an allergic reaction that can cause death. After a fire ant sting, the site will likely have a red welt that will be uncomfortable or painful and possibly itchy. Besides being unpleasant, they won't cause any other issues unless the victim has an allergic reaction.

➡ *Wash the area with plain soap and clean water and wait it out. Ice can help with the swelling and the pain, and an oral antihistamine or topical corticosteroid cream can help with any itchiness.*

➡ *Some common symptoms of a severe reaction include hives in other areas of the body, abdominal cramping, vomiting, intense nausea or diarrhea, a tight chest or trouble breathing, swelling of the tongue or throat or difficulty swallowing or dizziness. If you experience any of these symptoms it is important to call 911 immediately and seek medical help. An EpiPen can be used if available.*

# In and Around Our Homes

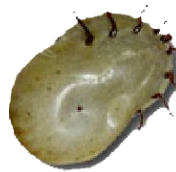
## TICKS



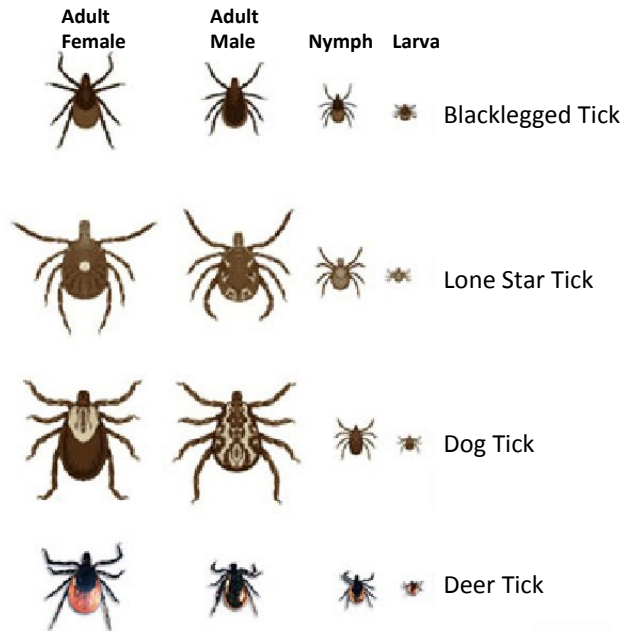
Ticks are closely related to spiders, mites and scorpions. They are often found in backyards, in tall grasses and areas with overgrowth. They cannot jump or fly; they rest on the tips of grasses and shrubs and drop onto a host as it passes by. Infected ticks can transmit serious disease to people, domesticated animals and wildlife.

Ticks may be brought into homes on people, pets and rodents. Beginning with nymph, ticks have a blood meal from wildlife, pets or humans at every stage of life.

The brown dog tick prefers dogs, so check your pets regularly.



Engorged Dog Tick



## CHIGGERS



Actual size: 1/150 inch



Chiggers can be found in moist, grassy areas like fields, forests, and your lawn. It's the babies (larvae) not the adults, that you have to avoid. They're red, orange, yellow, or straw-colored, and no more than 0.3 millimeters long. (The average salt grain is approximately 0.3 mm.)

After hatching from eggs, the babies don't fly or travel very far on their own. They stay clumped together in large groups on leaves and grass, close to the ground, and, as they pass, attach to animals or people. Once chiggers latch on to your clothing, they move around until they find a patch of skin. They use sharp, jaw-like claws to make tiny holes then inject saliva that turns some of your cells into mush. The liquefied cells become their food. Once they are on you, they can stay attached to your skin for several days while they eat.

Chigger bites most often show up in clusters around the waist or lower legs. A few hours after the bites occur, you'll start to itch; the itching usually lasts for several days. You may notice that your skin turns red, has bumps, blisters, or a hive-like rash that may take a week or two to heal.

Chiggers don't spread diseases. The biggest health issue is that too much scratching can cause more skin irritation or an infection. If bitten, take a bath or shower and scrub your skin with soap and water to eliminate any chiggers that remain. Using hot water, wash your clothes, any blankets or towels that touched the ground. Bugs may still be hanging on. Chigger bites usually get better on their own. However, if yours are still bothering you after a few days, see your doctor.

# In and Around Our Woodland Areas



## OWLS

For a full list of birds found on Hilton Head Island, SC (as documented by the HH Audubon Society) go to: <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/5533>

### **Great Horned Owl**

The Great Horned owl has long, earlike tufts, intimidating yellow-eyed stare, and deep hooting voice. This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself, but it also dines on daintier fare such as tiny mice and frogs.

➡ *Great horned owls will attack pets. Never leave your pets unattended.*



If you hear an agitated group of cawing American crows, they may be mobbing a great horned owl. Crows may gather and harass the owl for hours. The crows have good reason, the great horned owl is their most dangerous predator.

Great horned owls are covered in extremely soft feathers that help them fly very quietly in pursuit of prey. Their short, wide wings allow them to maneuver among the trees of the forest. Their large eyes are designed for excellent night vision, though they don't move in their sockets. Instead, owls can swivel their heads more than 180 degrees to look in any direction. They also have sensitive hearing, thanks in part to facial disc feathers that direct sound waves to their ears.

Great horned owls typically nest in trees such as pines. They usually adopt a nest that was built by another species, but they also use cavities in live trees, dead snags, deserted buildings and human-made platforms.

### **Barred Owl**

The great horned owl is the most serious predatory threat to the barred owl. Although the two species often live in the same areas, a barred owl will move to another part of its territory when a great horned owl is nearby.

The barred owl, also known as the hoot owl, is one of the most common owls in North America. It is a large 16-24 inches and is similar in appearance to the great horned owl, except for its lack of ear tufts. Brown crescent-shaped bars are distinct against the pale chest, and its belly has brown longitudinal streaks. The barred owl's face is pale with concentric circles near the margin of the facial disk. Its eyes are dark brown, almost black, and are set close together.

Like many owls, the barred owl has asymmetrical ears; not only is one ear bigger than the other, they are also at different positions on the bird's head. This is an adaptation that enables owls to pinpoint the exact location of their prey by the minute differences in sound that the brain receives from each ear.

The barred owl's distinct call may be heard early in the spring when breeding season begins. Nesting takes place in an unlined cavity of a hollow tree or in the abandoned nest of a crow, hawk, or squirrel.

### **Eastern Screech Owl**

The Eastern screech-owl is found wherever trees are, or in backyard nest boxes. No bigger than a pint glass, these supremely camouflaged birds hide out in nooks and tree crannies through the day. Listen for a commotion of Blue Jays, chickadees, and titmice - they may be swooping around a screech owl with noisy calls. This can be enough of a nuisance to make the owl move on, and it alerts other birds to the predator's presence.

Eastern screech-owls eat most kinds of small animals, including birds and mammals as well as surprisingly large numbers of earthworms, insects, crayfish, tadpoles, frogs, and lizards.



Great Horned Owl



Barred Owl



Eastern Screech Owl



# In and Around Our Woodland Areas

## OSPREYS

Ospreys, locally known as fish hawks or fish eagles, are medium-sized birds (females being larger than males), measuring 21-24 inches in length with a 55-70 inch wingspan. The osprey's back is brownish black, the breast is white with buff or brown speckles, and the tail is gray with dark bars. A dark stripe extends along the side of the face through the bird's eye. The wings have characteristic dark "wrist" marks when viewed from below and are "bent" like those of a seagull.

Ospreys are specialized for living near water where fish constitute almost their entire diet. The legs are long and equipped with long, curved talons and the undersurface of the toes is covered with short spines, or spicules, that allow the bird to hold on to slippery prey. The plumage is dense and oily and enables the osprey to dive into the water, a unique behavior among birds of prey. Other fish eaters, such as the bald eagle, snatch fish from the surface without entering the water.

Ospreys select habitat that has suitable perching structures and easy access to fish. Ospreys hover before landing, so they need nesting sites where they can easily land. They have been known to nest on both man-made and natural objects such as cranes, buildings, bridges, nest platforms, telephone poles, or partially rotten trees with no tops. All of these objects allow comfortable landing. Osprey build huge nests which eventually reach "eagle size."



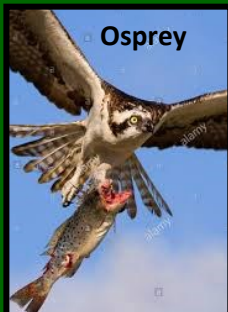
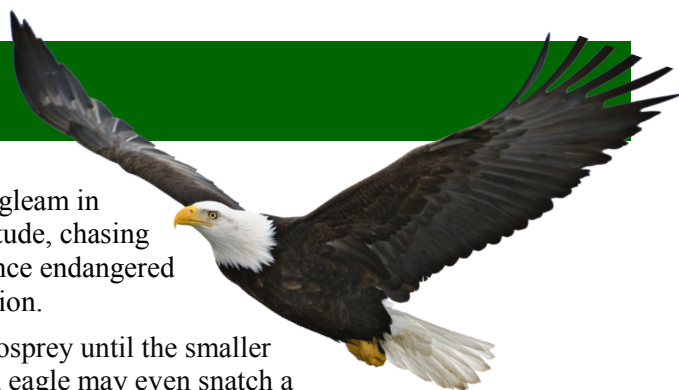
## BALD EAGLES

These regal birds aren't really bald, but their white-feathered heads gleam in contrast to their chocolate-brown body and wings. They soar in solitude, chasing other birds for their food, or gathering by the hundreds in winter. Once endangered by hunting and pesticides, bald eagles have flourished under protection.

Rather than do their own fishing, a bald eagle will harass a hunting osprey until the smaller raptor drops its prey in midair, where the eagle swoops it up. A bald eagle may even snatch a fish directly out of an osprey's talons. Fisherman can also lose prey to a bald eagle. Bald eagles occasionally hunt cooperatively, with one individual flushing prey towards another.

Bald eagles typically nest in forested areas adjacent to large bodies of water, staying away from heavily developed areas when possible. For perching, bald eagles prefer tall, mature coniferous or deciduous trees that provide a wide view of the surroundings. Nests are typically built near the trunk, high up in the tree but below the crown (unlike osprey nests).

Bald eagles build some of the largest of all bird nests—typically 5-6 feet in diameter and 2-4 feet tall, and ranging in shape from cylindrical to conical to flat, depending on the supporting tree. Both sexes bring materials to the nest, but the female does most of the placement. Nests can take up to three months to build, and may be reused (and added to) year after year.



# In and Around Our Woodland Areas



## HAWKS

### ***Red Shouldered Hawk***

Red shouldered hawk adults are colorful hawks with dark-and-white checkered wings and warm reddish barring on the breast. The tail is black with narrow white bands.

Red-shouldered hawks soar over forests or perch on tree branches or utility wires. They build stick nests in a main crotch of a large tree. Its whistled *kee-rah* is a distinctive sound of the forest.

These forest hawks hunt prey ranging from mice to frogs and snakes. Although the American crow often mobs the red-shouldered hawk, sometimes the relationship is not so one-sided. They may chase each other and try to steal food from each other. They may also both attack a great horned owl and join forces to chase the owl out of the hawk's territory.

➡ *In their territories, Red-shouldered hawks are aggressive, sometimes locking talons with intruding hawks and also attacking crows, great horned owls, and even humans.*

➡ *Hawks possess brilliant eyesight, they can spot small mammals from over 1.9 miles away. Never leave your pets unattended.*

### ***Red Tailed Hawk***

This is probably the most common hawk in North America. You may see them atop telephone poles, eyes fixed on the ground to catch the movements of a vole or a rabbit, or simply waiting out cold weather before climbing a thermal up-draft into the sky.

You're unlikely to see this bird in your backyard (unless yours is a big one). Red-tailed hawks eat mostly mammals, so they're less likely to visit a popular feeder than a cooper's hawk. Red-tailed hawks have been seen hunting as a pair, guarding opposite sides of the same tree to catch tree squirrels.

### ***Cooper's Hawk***

Among the bird world's most skillful fliers, cooper's hawks are common woodland hawks that tear through cluttered tree canopies in high speed pursuit of other birds. You're most likely to see one prowling above a forest edge or field using just a few stiff wingbeats followed by a glide. Cooper's hawks are sometimes unwanted guests at bird feeders, looking for an easy meal (not your bird seed).

If you put out seed for birds in your backyard, there's a chance you'll also attract the attention of a cooper's hawk. Catching smaller birds is just doing what comes naturally for a cooper's hawk.

➡ *If a Cooper's hawk takes up residence in your yard, you can take your feeders down for a few days and the hawk will likely move on.*

Cooper's hawks build nests in pines and oaks, often on flat ground rather than hillsides, and in dense woods. Nests are typically 25-50 feet high, often about two-thirds of the way up the tree in a crotch or on a horizontal branch.

**Red  
Shouldered  
Hawk**

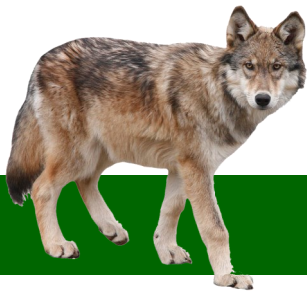


**Red  
Tailed  
Hawk**



**Cooper's  
Hawk**





# In and Around Our Woodland Areas

## COYOTES

In body form and size, the coyote resembles a small collie dog, with erect pointed ears, slender muzzle and a bushy tail. Coyotes are predominantly brownish gray in color with a light gray to cream-colored belly. Color varies greatly, however, from nearly black to red or nearly white in some individuals and local populations. Most have dark or black guard hairs over their back and tail. In our area, they can weigh between 35-45 pounds.

Coyotes bed in sheltered areas, but do not generally use dens except when raising young. They may seek shelter underground during severe weather or when closely pursued. Den sites are typically located less than a mile from water. Coyotes will often dig out and enlarge holes dug by smaller burrowing animals.

Coyotes are most active at night and during early morning hours (especially where human activity occurs), and during hot summer weather. They may also be active throughout the day where there is minimal human interference and also during cool weather.

They have good eyesight, hearing and a keen sense of smell. Coyotes have been measured at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour.

Both adult male and female coyotes hunt and bring food to their young for several weeks. Other adults associated with the denning pair may also help in feeding and caring for the young. Coyotes commonly hunt as singles or pairs and extensive travel is common while hunting. They will hunt in the same area regularly, however, if food is plentiful. They occasionally bury food remains for later use.

Coyotes sometimes prey on pets and are a threat to public health and safety when they frequent residential areas, and carry rabies.

➡ *Coyotes are present throughout Sea Pines. Keep your pets on a leash.*

➡ *When you encounter a coyote:*

- *Yell or spray them with a hose*
- *Back away slowly; never turn your back and run*

➡ *If you feel a coyote is becoming a threat, call the Sea Pines Security Department Dispatch phone line at 843.671.7170. Our Wildlife Officer of the Security Department will respond and evaluate the situation.*

Coyote



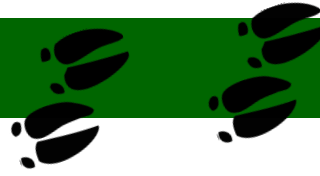
Large  
Dog







## DEER



### *White Tailed Deer*

Both the female and the male have white tails and necks, but for much of the year males can be distinguished by the presence of antlers. Young deer, called fawns, have white spots for the first few months, then take on the typical reddish-brown coloration of adults. When startled, the deer will often raise their tails in the air to show the white underside which can serve as an alarm signal to other deer. This is also known as "flagging," and makes it easier for fawns to follow their mother if she senses danger.

Deer are most active at dawn and dusk.

➡ *Do not walk your dog off the leash. A dog will usually chase a deer, and a deer being chased could run into you, your car, or even your sliding glass door.*

In Sea Pines you can't drive very far at dusk without seeing deer; drive with caution. Deer tend to panic and act irrationally when frightened.

➡ **Slow Down.** *Drive at slower speeds during dawn and dusk hours when deer are known to be more active. Also, remember that deer often travel in herds, so if you see one animal there may be others in the vicinity.*

➡ **Use High Beams.** *Using your vehicle's high beams (if possible) can help you spot deer more quickly, which can give you the best opportunity to slow down as you approach.*

➡ **Don't Swerve!** *It's an automatic response to swerve out of the pathway of an animal that darts out into the path of your vehicle. Experience proves that the property damage and injuries caused by car vs. deer accidents are more severe when the driver swerves to avoid hitting the animal. When you swerve to avoid a head-on collision with a deer, you could put yourself and your passengers in even greater peril. You could end up in the other lane and hit another car head-on, potentially injuring or killing yourself and other passengers. You could also run off the road and hit an object such as a tree or trigger a rollover accident by swerving. The best thing to do when a deer runs into the road is to slow down as much as possible and then allow your car to hit the deer.*

What if my vehicle hits a deer?

➡ *To report a vehicle collision with a deer within the Sea Pines Community, call Sea Pines Security Dispatch at 843.671.7170. If there are injuries, call 911.*

What should I do if I encounter an injured deer?

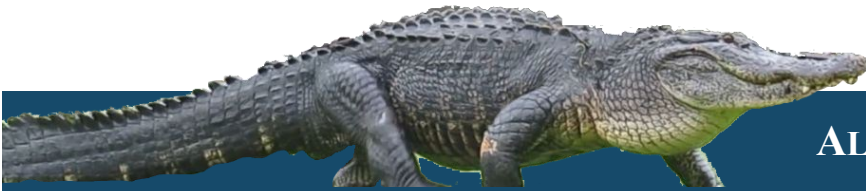
➡ *Call Sea Pines Security Dispatch at 843.671.7170.*

Deer are eating my plants, what can I do?

➡ *To help keep your gardens looking prime, ask your local landscaper for a list of the plants recommended to deter deer.*



# In and Around Our Lakes and Lagoons



## ALLIGATORS

Alligators are cold-blooded, which means their body temperature is not constant, but changes with the temperature of the environment. This is why you see alligators on our lagoon banks basking in the sun trying to raise their temperature.

➡ *Be watchful when approaching any body of water or if your vision is blocked by a bank; keep your distance.*

Alligators can see clearly at night. They have eyes on the tops of their heads due to the fact that they spend a lot of their time in the water. Interestingly, their large eyes provide them with clear night vision.

➡ *Alligators are more active at dusk, so if walking at dusk or after dark, carry a flashlight and be aware of your surroundings. You may unexpectedly encounter an alligator on a leisure trail or crossing a road.*

After a courtship in which the male claims a territory and courts a female, the female lays between 20-60 eggs near a body of fresh water and covers them with vegetation. The young remain with the female for up to a year and are defended by her against predators like wading birds.

➡ *Be conscious of nests near water's edge that are covered and not easily seen. Never come between a female alligator and her nest or young. You will immediately be considered a threat. Alligators aren't hardwired for aggressive behavior toward humans unless they perceive a threat.*

➡ *Sea Pines Security places a sign (see example on right) where they are aware of an alligator nest.*



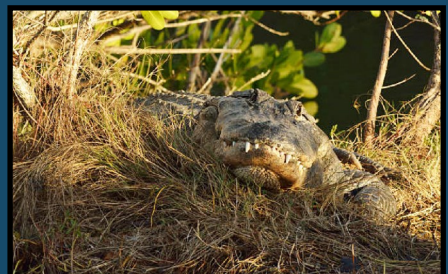
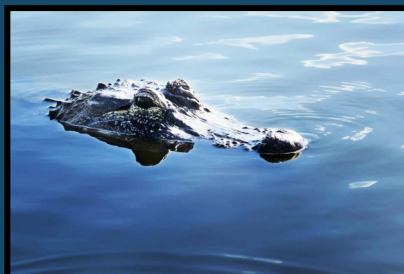
Alligators are known to be opportunistic eaters. That's a fancy way of saying alligators are a little lazy and don't want to work too hard for their food. Less desirable food will trump a tasty meal if the tasty meal takes a lot of work.

➡ *Never feed an alligator. Alligators fed by humans come to expect food with each human encounter and if they don't get it they may become aggressive. Since alligators are experts at finding their way home when relocated, any alligator deemed to be aggressive by the authorities are put down rather than relocated.*

➡ *If you're close to an alligator that becomes aggressive, back off and run away. The idea of running in zigzags is a myth. Just run in a straight line, directly away from the alligator.*

➡ *If you encounter an alligator that you believe is acting aggressively, call Sea Pines Security Dispatch at 843.671.7170 to report it's behavior and location. Do not take any action on your own.*

*If you see someone in immediate danger, call 911, then report it to Sea Pines Security Dispatch.*



Yellow Bellied  
Slider



# In and Around Our Lakes and Lagoons

## TURTLES

*\*See page 28 for Loggerhead Turtle Information*

### **Yellow Bellied Sliders**

The most common turtles spotted sunning themselves on the banks of our lagoons are yellow bellied sliders. Adults are typically dark with vertical yellow markings on their carapace (hard upper shell). The most conspicuous marking is the yellow blotch on the side of the head, just behind the eye. They have yellow bellies and show some yellow on their heads and legs. The plastron (bottom half) of these turtles is yellow with round, dark markings along its edge. Older adult yellow bellied turtles can become very dark, obscuring many of their distinguishing marks.

The yellow bellied turtle is large; it reaches lengths from 4.9 to 7.9 inches. The slider is considered a diurnal turtle; it feeds mainly in the morning and frequently basks on shore, on logs, or while floating, during the rest of the day. At night, it sleeps on the bottom or on the surface near brush piles.

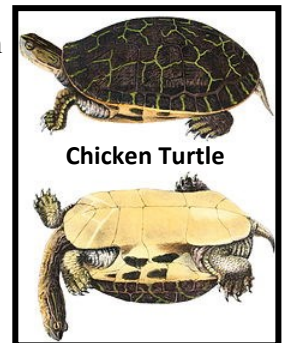
Hatchlings are almost entirely carnivorous, feeding on insects, spiders, crustaceans, tadpoles, fish, and carrion. As they age, adults eat less and less meat, and up to 95% of their nutritional intake eventually comes from plants.

### **Chicken Turtle**

The chicken turtle has an unusually long, striped neck that is close to the length of its shell, with a yellow stripe on both the forelegs and rear legs. It has webbed feet to help it swim. It has a distinguishable net-like pattern on its carapace. The carapace is pear-shaped and is an olive to dark brown. Adults reach from 4-10 inches.

Chicken turtles are semiaquatic turtles, found both in water and on land. They prefer quiet, still bodies of water such as shallow ponds and lakes, ditches and marshes. They are social, spending much of their time basking on logs and rocks and swim in small groups.

Chicken turtles are omnivorous, eating crayfish, fish, fruits, insects, invertebrates, frogs, tadpoles, and plants. These turtles use their well-developed hyoid apparatus (the bones which suspend the tongue and larynx) to create suction that pulls food items into its throat, which is very unusual.



### **Diamondback Terrapins**

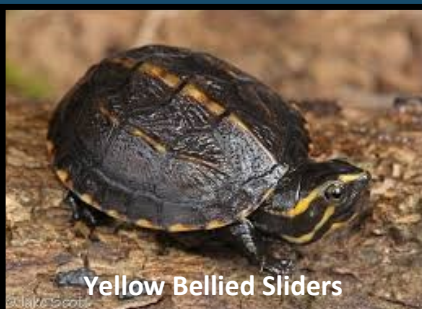
Named for the diamond-shaped growth rings on its top shell, the diamondback terrapin is believed to be the only turtle in the world that lives exclusively in brackish water (containing some salt, but not as much as ocean water), habitats like tidal marshes, estuaries and lagoons. Most terrapins hibernate during the winter by burrowing into the mud of marshes.

Terrapins are strong swimmers. They have strongly webbed hind feet, but not flippers as do sea turtles. They grow to an average carapace length of around 5 - 7.5 inches. Diamondbacks have strong jaws for crushing shells of prey such as clams and snails. This is especially true of females, who have larger and more muscular jaws than males.

Diamondback terrapins consume fish, snails, worms, clams, crabs and marsh plants.

➡ *Terrapins are turtles that spend time both on land and in brackish, swampy water.*

➡ *Salmonella isn't just a food-borne illness; turtles and other reptiles carry salmonella bacteria, which can be easily transmitted to people.*



Yellow Bellied Sliders



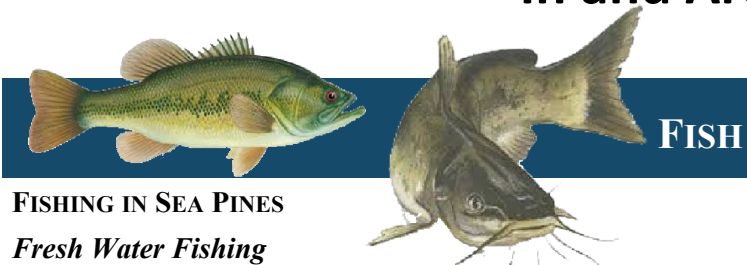
Chicken Turtle



Diamondback Terrapins



# In and Around Our Lagoons and Lakes



## FISHING IN SEA PINES

### ***Fresh Water Fishing***

The fresh-water lakes in the Sea Pines Forest Preserve offer opportunities to fish for bass, crappie, bream and catfish. The Forest Preserve is also home to Lake Joe, which is stocked with catfish, a favorite for children. Lake Joe is restricted to children 14 and under and the adults accompanying them.

### Brackish Lagoons and Tidal Waterways Fishing

Brackish lagoons and tidal waterways are desirable locations for crabbing and saltwater fishing. Please be aware that some fishing locations require a South Carolina recreational saltwater fishing license.

Those fishing solely on the shore/ocean and not on Sea Pines property ONLY need the State License. Anyone fishing on navigable brackish saltwater (within Sea Pines) must purchase both the State License and the CSA fishing permit. If the brackish / salt water is not navigable, they only need the CSA fishing permit.

### ***Fishing Privileges***

#### For Property Owners & Their Guests:

Sea Pines CSA fishing permits are not required for fishing inside Sea Pines for Property Owners & their accompanied guests. Property Owners should carry their Sea Pines Property Owner ID Card and present it if stopped by Sea Pines Security.

Property Owners can purchase a fishing permit on behalf of their guest or relative (if the owner does not plan to accompany the guest while fishing). If for any reason the Property Owner cannot come by the office, we will accept written confirmation that the owner approves their guest / relative to purchase a fishing permit.

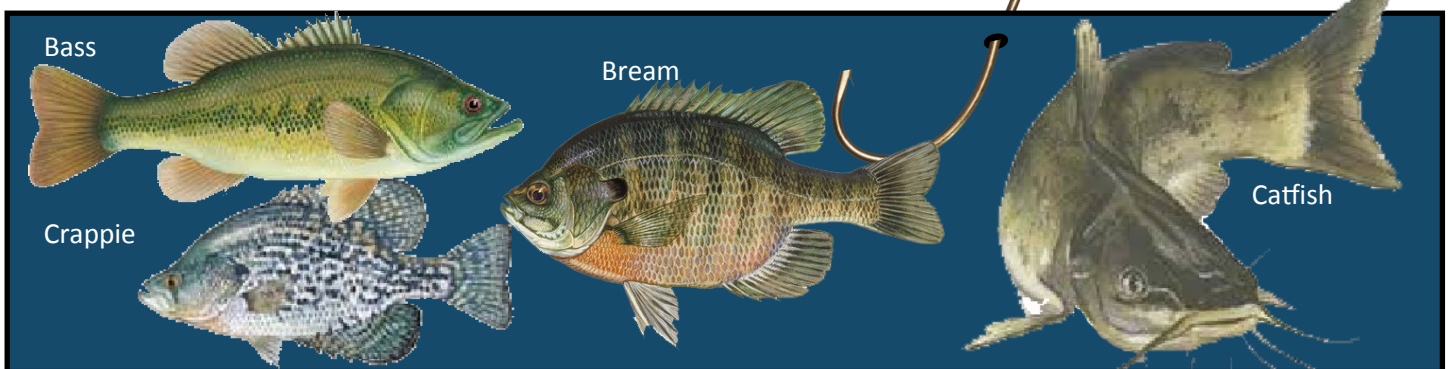
We have limited the number in a group to purchase one fishing permit to a maximum of 5 people per license (ppl). Therefore, up to 5 ppl fishing pay \$5 for the group. Between 6 -10 ppl pay \$10 for 2x fishing permits.

#### For Sea Pines Rental Guests:

Sea Pines CSA fishing permits are required for rental guests and may be obtained from the CSA Administration Building located at 175 Greenwood Drive Hilton Head Island, SC 29928 Monday-Friday from 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM. A valid resort/ rental guest vehicle pass and a \$5 fee are required to obtain a fishing permit which will only be valid during the time frame noted on your resort/ rental guest pass.

CSA fishing permits are available for purchase after usual office hours from our Dispatch Office (after 4:30 PM during weekdays and throughout the weekend). When you arrive to the CSA Building (175 Greenwood Drive), the Dispatch Office is the 1st door on left when facing the front of the building. Please ring the doorbell for assistance. Fishing permits are \$5 for groups of up to 5 people and we accept cash only. The officer on duty will require your blue Sea Pines vehicle pass to show the location of your rental property, the dates of stay and the Rental Company or owner you are renting through.

Marriott Grande Ocean guests are allowed to purchase fishing permits, as long as they present their blue vehicle pass.



# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water



## EGRETS

### **Great Egret**

You'll find great egrets in both freshwater and saltwater habitats. They are colonial nesters, typically placing stick nests high in trees, often on islands that are isolated from mammalian predators such as raccoons. Males choose the display areas, where nests are later constructed. The nest itself is up to 100 feet off the ground, often over water, usually in or near the top of a shrub or tree.

Great Egrets wade in shallow water (both fresh and salt) to hunt fish, frogs and other small aquatic animals. They typically stand still and watch for unsuspecting prey to pass by. Then, with startling speed, the egrets strike with a jab of their long neck and bill.

The pristinely white great egret gets even more dressed up for the breeding season. A patch of skin on its face turns neon green, and long plumes grow from its back.

### **Snowy Egret**

Snowy Egrets are among the most elegant of the herons, the slender snowy egret sets off immaculate white plumage with black legs and brilliant yellow feet. Those feet seem to play a role in stirring up or herding small aquatic animals as the egret forages. Breeding snowy egrets grow filmy, curving plumes.

The snowy egret is smaller than a great egret. Male and female snowy egrets take turns incubating their eggs. As one mate takes over for the other, it sometimes presents a stick, almost as if passing a baton. Both parents continue caring for the young when they hatch.

### **Cattle Egret**

Cattle Egrets breed in coastal barrier islands, marshes, reservoirs, lakes, quarries, swamps, riverside woodlands, and upland forests. They usually nest in colonies already established by native herons and egrets.

Cattle Egrets have broad, adaptable diets: primarily insects, plus other invertebrates, fish, frogs, mammals, and birds. They feed voraciously alone or in loose flocks of up to hundreds.

The most gregarious of all herons, cattle egrets flock all year long and form dense breeding colonies and nonbreeding roosts. Cattle Egrets leave their roost or nesting colony just after sunrise, feed in the morning and afternoon with a rest at midday, and make their return flight an hour before sunset. They fly with their necks folded in an S-shape, and run or walk with a swaying gait while foraging.



### **HERONS AND EGRETS**

These are mostly wetlands birds, made for foraging in the shallows with their long leg legs and extended necks. Herons and egrets all belong to the same family (Ardiedae), which has 64 members world-wide.

*Left to right: Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron*

For a full list of birds found on Hilton Head Island, SC, (as documented by the HH Audubon Society), go to: <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/5533>

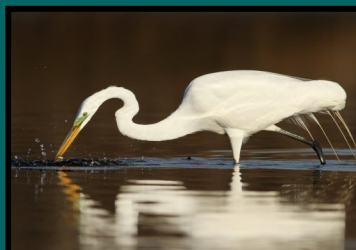


Great Egret Preening



Yellow beak, black feet = Great Egret

Black beak, yellow feet = Snowy Egret



Cattle Egret





# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water

## HERONS

### **Great Blue Heron**

The great blue heron is one of the largest birds in the heron species and often spotted in the Sea Pines Forest Preserve. This giant bird stands up to 39 inches high and is a master fisherman using its long, colored toes to entice fish. When prey ventures too close, the heron uses its razor-sharp beak to strike with deadly accuracy and rarely misses its quarry.

Great Blue Herons eat nearly anything within striking distance, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, insects, and other birds. They grab smaller prey in their strong mandibles or use their dagger-like bills to impale larger fish, often shaking them to break or relax the sharp spines before gulping them down.

Great Blue Herons nest mainly in trees, but will also nest on the ground, on bushes, in mangroves, and on structures such as duck blinds, channel markers, or artificial nest platforms. Colonies can consist of 500 or more individual nests, with multiple nests per tree built 100 or more feet off the ground.



In flight the great blue heron folds its neck into an “S” shape and trails its long legs behind, dangling them as it prepares to land or when courting.

➡ *Great Blue Herons defend feeding territories from other herons with dramatic displays in which the birds approach intruders with their head thrown back, wings outstretched, and bill pointing skyward. Gulls and even humans may be a target of this defensive maneuver.*

### **Little Blue Heron**

Despite its different last name, the little blue heron is probably a close relative of the snowy egret. It looks much like a snowy when it is young, but molts to a dark slate-blue plumage as an adult. The little blue is generally wary and hard to approach.

Usually slow and methodical in its foraging, the little blue heron walks very slowly in shallows or stands still waiting for prey to approach. It may feed in shallow water or on shore, also in grassy fields. Its diet is mainly fish and crustaceans. Away from water, the little blue’s food items include tadpoles, frogs, lizards, snakes, turtles and spiders. You’ll typically see them only in ones and twos, although they may gather with other herons and egrets, particularly at times when a school of small fish has become trapped in shallow water.

Little Blues nest mostly in shrubs and small trees in standing water or upland sites on islands. A row of built-in “teeth” along the little blue heron’s middle toe serves as a grooming comb. The bird uses this handy tool to scratch its head, neck, and throat.



Little Blue Heron



Great Blue Heron







# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water

## HERONS

### ***Green Heron***

The green heron is small and solitary at most seasons and often somewhat secretive, living around small bodies of water or densely vegetated areas. It can be seen flicking its tail nervously and raising and lowering its crest. The "green" on this bird's back is an iridescent color, and often looks dull bluish or simply dark.

The green heron forages mostly by standing still or stalking very slowly at edge of shallow water, waiting for prey to approach, sometimes using "bait," dropping feather or small twig on surface of water to lure fish within striking distance. They eat small fish such as minnows, sunfish, gizzard shad, crayfish and other crustaceans, aquatic insects, frogs and tadpoles. Their diet can also include grasshoppers, snakes, earthworms, snails, small rodents.

The green heron nests as isolated pairs or in small groups, rarely in large colonies. The nest is a platform of sticks and is usually built in a shrub or tree 5-30' above ground, but sometimes on ground.

### ***Yellow-crowned Night Heron***

While not as slender as a typical heron, the yellow-crowned night heron's smooth purple-gray colors, sharp black-and-white face, and long yellow plumes lend it a touch of elegance. They forage at all hours of the day and night, stalking crustaceans in shallow wetlands and wet fields. Their diet leans heavily on crabs and crayfish, which they catch with a lunge and shake apart, or swallow whole. They're most common in coastal marshes, barrier islands, and mangroves, but their range extends inland as far as the Midwest.

Pairs greet each other by raising crest, calling, touching bills, nibbling at each other's feathers. They usually nest in trees 30-40' above ground, but sometimes very close to ground or water in thickets, mangroves. Their nest is a platform of sticks, lined with finer twigs and sometimes leaves.

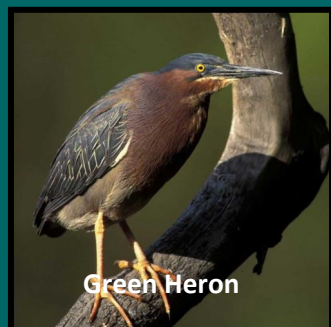
### ***Black-crowned Night Heron***

Seen by day, these chunky herons seem dull and lethargic, with groups sitting hunched and motionless in trees near water. They become more active at dusk, flying out to foraging sites, calling "wok" as they pass high overhead in the darkness. Some studies suggest that they feed at night because they are dominated by other herons and egrets by day.

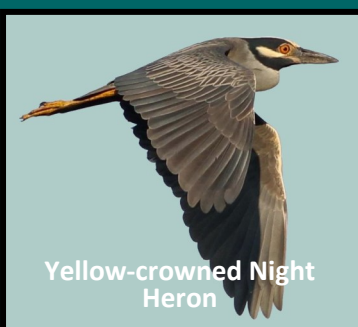
The black-crowned night heron forages by standing still or walking slowly at the edge of shallow water. They may perch above water on pilings, stumps or small boats. Their diet consists of fish, squid, crustaceans, aquatic insects, frogs, snakes, clams, mussels, rodents, carrion and sometimes specializes on eggs and young birds which can cause problems in tern colonies.

The black-crowned night heron nests in colony situations from on ground to more than 150' high in trees, shrubs, marsh vegetation; most commonly 10-40' up and on firm support.

➡ To help differentiate: the legs of the yellow-crowned night heron extend further past their tail than do the legs of the black-crowned night heron.

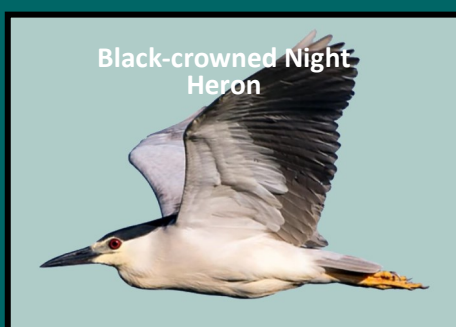


Green Heron



Yellow-crowned Night Heron

The Yellow-crowned Night Heron's feet extend further beyond its tail than the Black-crowned Night Heron's when in flight.



Black-crowned Night Heron

# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water



## IBIS

White Ibises gather in groups in shallow wetlands and estuaries. Their bright red legs move through the water and their curved red bill probes the muddy surface below. Adults are all white with black wingtips. White ibises nest in colonies in trees and shrubs along the water's edge, changing locations nearly every year.

Male white ibises are super protective. They guard the nest and their female to prevent other ibises from stealing sticks from the nest and from advances of other males during nest building and egg laying. It's not until night when the risks are lower that the female is left alone.

White ibises occur in many types of wetlands including swamps, mangroves, freshwater marshes, and shallow ponds. They nest in colonies in trees and shrubs near fresh, brackish, or salt water.

They forage most often in wet areas with less than 8 inches of water and sparse, short vegetation, moving their long, downward pointed beak side to side until they touch a shrimp, crab, worm, small snake or minnow. They then quickly grab their prey and eat their catch whole.



☞ *If you see an ibis in your yard, they will poke their beaks into lawns searching for food such as grubs, worms, snails, frogs and toads.*

## WOOD STORKS



Large, white wood storks wade through our wetlands. The head is a dark brown color, with a black face leading to a large dirty yellow colored bill. The head and the extremely long bill make it easy to recognize and will separate it from other large wading birds that you might see in the area. Its legs are quite distinctive, a blackish grey color with contrasting feet a distinctive pink color.

The wood stork is a good flier, soaring on thermals with neck and legs outstretched. This bald-headed wading bird stands just over 3 feet tall, towering above almost all other wetland birds. It slowly walks through wetlands with its long, hefty bill down in the water feeling for fish and crustaceans.

Wood Storks breed in fresh and brackish forested wetlands. They nest in trees above standing water. Almost any tree or shrub will do as long as standing water is present. Wood Stork parents regurgitate water over the nestlings to keep them cool.



Ibis



Wood Stork



# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water



## CORMORANTS

The cormorant is very common in the Lowcountry, flocking to our lagoons to feed as a group. They are efficient fishers, swimming underwater to pursue fish they spot using their beak as their fishing tool. It's not uncommon for a flock of cormorants to "fish out" a lagoon in a week if not in just one day.

Large wading birds that routinely fish these same lagoons from the shallows have learned to recognize that these visiting flocks of cormorants present a golden opportunity to get a good meal with relatively little effort by stealing a meal from the master fisher cormorants. The usual theft method is surprise: herons and egrets fly in a low approach over the flock of cormorants, watching for an unsuspecting cormorant to surface with its catch.

Cormorants are able to stay under water up to 70 seconds. They eat mostly fish and sometimes small invertebrates such as crayfish. Cormorants use their webbed feet to propel them underwater. Cormorants run along the surface of the water to gain enough speed for flight.



Gull stealing a meal from a Cormorant

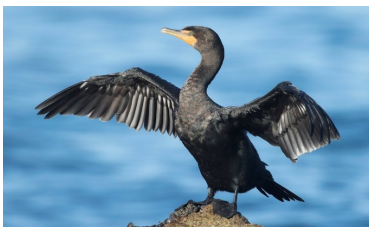
## ANHINGAS

Anhingas swim with their bodies partly or mostly submerged and their long, snakelike neck held partially out of the water. After a swim they perch on branches or logs to dry out, holding their wings out and spreading their tails much like the cormorant. They frequently soar high in the sky, riding on thermals much like raptors and vultures.

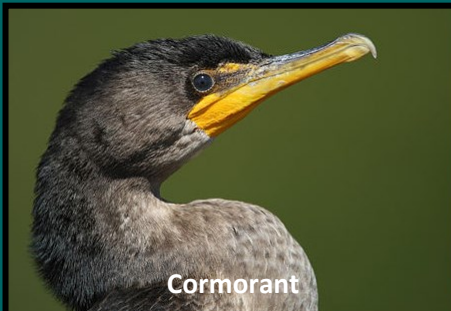
**Spread-wing postures** serve different purposes for the anhinga and the cormorant:



**Anhingas** cannot fly away after swimming because their wings are wettable. Instead, they must climb out of the water, using beak and feet, and dry out before taking to the wing. Anhingas also have unusually low metabolic rates and unusually high rates of heat loss from their bodies. Whether wet or dry, they exhibit spread-wing postures mostly under conditions of bright sunlight and cool ambient temperatures, and characteristically orient themselves with their backs to the sun. Thus, it appears that anhingas adopt a spread-wing posture primarily to absorb solar energy to supplement their low metabolic heat production.



**Cormorants** use spread-wing postures only for drying their wings, not for thermo-regulation. Although cormorant plumage also retains water, only the outer portion of the feathers is wettable (not fully waterproof), so an insulating layer of air next to the skin is maintained when cormorants swim underwater. This difference in feather structure may explain why cormorants can spend more time foraging in the water than anhingas, and why cormorants can inhabit cooler climates, while the anhinga is restricted to tropical and subtropical waters.



Cormorant



Anhinga

The best way to tell if a bird in question is a cormorant or anhinga is their beaks. Cormorants use their hooked bills to grab their prey.

Anhingas use their long, straight, pointed beak to spear their prey. Both species hunt their prey by submerging themselves underwater.



# In and Around Our Lagoons, Marshes, and Tidal Water



## PELICANS

The brown pelican is a comically elegant bird with an oversized bill, sinuous neck, and big, dark body. Squadrons glide above the surf rising and falling in a graceful echo of the waves. Though they have an awkward gait on land, brown pelicans are strong swimmers and masterful fliers. They fly to and from their fishing grounds in V-formations or lines just above the water's surface.

Brown Pelicans feed by plunge-diving from high up, using the force of impact to stun small fish before scooping them up. During a dive, the brown pelican tucks its head and rotates its body to the left. This maneuver is probably to cushion the trachea and esophagus - which are found on the right side of the neck - from the impact.

➡ *Don't mistake the huge splashes they make during these dives for a whale sighting. The water formation that results from the dive can look like a whale's spout.*



While the brown pelican is draining the water (up to 2.6 gallons) from its bill after a dive, gulls often try to steal the fish right out of its pouch - sometimes while perching on the pelican's head. Pelicans themselves are not above stealing fish, as they follow fishing boats and hang around piers for handouts.

Ground nests range from depressions lined with grass to bulky structures of sticks, grass, and seaweed, while tree nests are usually well-built platforms of sticks lined with grass or leaves. Nests measure up to 30 inches across and 9 inches high on the outside, with an interior space up to 12 inches across and 4 inches deep.

Pelicans incubate their eggs with the skin of their webbed feet, essentially standing on the eggs to keep them warm.

## MARSH RICE RATS



Marsh rice rats inhabit tidal marshes, swamps, wet meadows, beaches, shorelines, estuaries and areas covered with grass and sedges. They have grayish brown fur with sparse blackish hairs; feet and belly are whitish or grey colored; tail is bi-colored: dark brown on the upper side, light grey on the bottom side. Their fur is coarse, dense and water repellent.

The marsh rice rat is equally well adapted to the life in the water and on the solid ground (semi-aquatic animal). They use feet to propel their body in the water and can swim 1,000 feet without a break and can dive 30 feet in depth. They are a nocturnal animal. Their diet is based on insects, snails, crabs, eggs, immature turtles, fish, sedges and aquatic plants.

➡ *Marsh rice rats prefer areas where the ground provides places with protection from predators. Keep your yard clear of debris.*



# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



## LOGGERHEAD TURTLES

The loggerhead sea turtle is a reptile and is related to land turtles, lizards, and snakes. Adapted to live in the ocean, loggerheads have powerful flippers instead of legs and a hydrodynamic body and shell which enables them to move elegantly through the sea. The loggerhead has a massive skull and a body weighing 250-400 pounds and reaching up to 4 feet long.

Loggerhead sea turtles nest on the beaches of Hilton Head Island and other southeast beaches between May and August. An adult female will nest every two to four years, coming to shore up to 6 times per season to lay eggs. Nesting typically occurs at night when the female crawls slowly to a dry part of the beach and begins to excavate a pit with her rear flippers. Once the cavity has been dug, she deposits an average of 120 eggs. She then covers the egg cavity and throws sand over the nest to disguise it from predators. When the work is done, the female slowly returns to the sea.

About 60 days after the female lays her eggs, the small turtles begin to hatch. They use a sharp tooth to break open the shell. All of the hatchlings join together to dig out of the nest, a job that can take several days. During the cool night, the 2 inch long hatchlings emerge from their sandy nest and scramble toward the sea. It is during this run to the sea that many hatchlings fall prey to waiting predators. Once in the water, hatchlings swim several miles off shore where they catch ocean currents. The hatchlings stay in the open water for several years before returning to nearshore waters. It will take these turtles about 30 years before they can reproduce.

Loggerhead turtles are a federally threatened species. It is estimated that only one out of ten thousand hatchlings survives to adulthood. There are many reasons for this, some natural, some man-made. Follow the guidelines below to help ensure that the loggerhead sea turtle remains an integral part of the ecology of Hilton Head Island.

- ➡ Lights out: Sea turtle hatchlings usually emerge from the nest at night. They orient themselves toward the brightest horizon and dash towards the sea. Visible lights from buildings or streets near the beach disorient the hatchlings, and they wander inland where they are almost certain to die.
- ➡ Keep beach clean: Turtles can get entangled in plastic bags or other debris. Don't leave your trash.
- ➡ Fill in holes: Baby turtles often fall into the holes left on the beach and get disoriented and fall to prey.
- ➡ Observe from a distance: Do not shine any lights near the nests.
- ➡ Don't harass: Don't pick up a baby turtle to "help it" on its journey to the water.
- ➡ Leave nest sites alone.
- ➡ Report injured turtles: To report dead, injured or harassed turtles, call SCDNR at 1.800.922.5431 or Beach Patrol at 843.785.3494.

For a list of questions you should be prepared to answer when reporting an injured or dead turtle to SCDNR, visit: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/seaturtle/stssn.htm> .





# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches

## STINGRAYS

Stingrays and skates are similar and look alike at first glance. Both stingrays and skates are types of flattened fish. They don't have any bones; a tough skin protects them and guides their movements through the water.

On their underside, they have 5 to 7 gills. On the top of their heads, they have openings near their eyes called spiracles which are like nostrils. They breathe by taking water in through their spiracles and out through their gills. This allows them to stay very low to the ground and move along the floor of the ocean.

Skates and rays are great at hiding! They can camouflage themselves by burying their bodies in the sand to hide from predators and their skin is colored to reflect the seafloor's shading.

Skates and rays differ in their physical and behavioral characteristics:

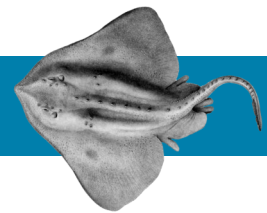
### *Stingrays*

- Stingrays are generally larger than skates.
- Stingrays are often more kite shaped.
- Stingrays flap their pectoral fins to propel themselves forward.
- Stingrays have a longer, skinnier tail like a whip.
- Stingrays are venomous. The spine has prongs with barbed edges that are covered in a marine bacterium which is secreted onto the spike.
- When the ray feels threatened, it may extend the spike and "sting" the attacker by puncturing it.

➡ *The toxins of the stingray venom are protein-based and can be broken down by hot water. If you are stung, follow the steps below.*

1. *Flush the wound with fresh water.*
2. *For pain relief, soak the wound in water as hot as the person can tolerate. Use tweezers to remove the stingers.*
3. *Scrub the wound with soap and fresh water.*
4. *Do not cover the wound with tape or close it with stitches.*

## SKATES



Skates are wider than they are long and tend to have a stronger, shorter tail than the stingray that is thick and covered in small, sharp protrusions.

They use their pelvic fins to repeatedly push off of the sand and "skate" along the floor of the ocean.

Skates are entirely harmless to humans. They have rows of spikes, but are not venomous.



Stingrays



Skate





# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches

## JELLYFISH

Beaufort, Hunting Island and Hilton Head Island local waters, like all salt water areas in the world, do have jellyfish. Most native jellyfish in our waters do not produce severe stings, but some may be very painful.

### ***Cannonball***

This is the most common jellyfish encountered in our waters. It is the least venomous native jelly and stings are very mild. It looks like a jelly ball and does not have tentacles; often seen washed up on the beach.

### ***Sea Nettle***

Believed to be responsible for most of the jellyfish stings that occur in our waters; it is common in the summer season. Tentacles can be several feet long and may produce a moderate to severe burning pain at point of contact. They often leave welts that look more like "whip marks".

### ***Moon***

This is the most recognized of jellyfish and is relatively infrequent in area waters. Its sting can produce a mild burning or prickly sensation that is usually confined to the point of contact.

### ***Sea Wasp***

The Sea Wasp is rare, but may appear after large storms. The Sea Wasp, also called the box jelly, is the most venomous jellyfish normally inhabiting our waters. Their painful sting can cause severe dermatitis (inflammation of the skin).

### ***The Portuguese Man-of-War***

The Portuguese Man-of-War is extremely rare in our waters, but can occasionally be blown in during a storm from the Gulf stream. Highly venomous tentacles can reach 30-40 feet in length. This species can produce considerable to severe pain.

### ***Lion's Mane***

Lion's Mane is usually common during colder months of the year. Its sting can produce a relatively mild burning pain at the contact point.

➡ If you see caution flags flying, it's probably because of the jellyfish. Beach Services want you to be aware and take precaution, especially with children.

➡ Lifeguards carry vinegar because it helps neutralize the sting. You can carry it yourself in order to be more prepared, or you can find the nearest lifeguard if you happen to come into contact with a jellyfish.

➡ Dead jellyfish and unattached tentacles can still sting.

➡ Treatment is usually white vinegar and scrapping off the stinger cells attached to the skin.



**Cannonball**



**Sea Nettle**



**Moon**



**Sea Wasp**



**Portuguese-of-War**



**Lion's Mane**

# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



Blue Crab

## CRABS

### **Blue Crab**

Crabs tend to congregate around docks or along muddy banks and can be caught from the shore or at sea. South Carolina law requires that crabbers toss back any crabs that measure less than five inches across the back or any crabs that are showing roe, indicating that the female is reproducing. Because females reproduce only once at the end of their life cycle, they must be protected to ensure the health of the local crab population.

➡ *Blue crabs can be caught with a chicken neck attached to the end of a string. The crabs start eating and the crabber pulls up the string and scoops up the crab with a net just before it reaches the surface.*

➡ *You do not need a fishing license to use a crab line, or a dip net. You do need a license if you have crab traps which require a basic (salt and freshwater) fishing license and a non-commercial (meaning you do not sell the crabs) license.*

### **Ghost Crab**

Ghost Crabs are common along the beaches of Hilton Head Island. This is a large (their shell can be 2 or more inches across), sand colored crab that is known for its speed. Although they are most active at night, they can also be seen occasionally during the day sitting at the entrance to burrows they build in the sand to escape predators and the heat of the day. Even though they spend most of their time on land, ghost crabs breathe via gills, and must enter the ocean regularly to keep their gills moist in order for them to be able to absorb oxygen. Raccoons are their main predator.

### **Horseshoe Crab**

These fascinating creatures are found commonly along our beachfront sitting within the intertidal flats. Horseshoe crabs lay eggs in the intertidal flats during the spring months. These spawning events are heaviest during the full moon and can often result in hundreds of crabs coming ashore to spawn in one night. The female crab lays over 4,000 eggs per nest about 6-10 inches deep in the sand. Each egg is roughly the size of a pinhead. Once fertilized by the male, the light green eggs begin to develop. The larval stage of the egg is a staple food source for at least 20 species of migrating shorebirds.

➡ *The horseshoe crab is harmless, utilizing its shell as protective armor to fend off predators. Should you see crabs buried down deep in the sand, leave them in place as they may still be in the process of egg laying.*

➡ *If you see them struggling on their back in the sun, please flip them over and help them to the ocean, as the heat of a summer day can cause death.*

### **Fiddler Crab**

These creatures are abundant in the mud flats at low tide. They are smaller than a dime and live in holes they dig in the mud. They plug the holes as the tide comes in to help stay dry. They also hibernate, remaining in their burrows until the water warms up. Males show off their pincer claw to attract females.

Ghost Crab



Horseshoe Crabs Spawning



Male Fiddler Crab



# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



## DOLPHINS

The bottlenose dolphin has the second-largest relative brain size of any mammal on Earth (humans have the largest), and a study conducted by the University of Chicago showed that they can remember whistles of other dolphins they'd lived with after 20 years of separation.

Strand feeding, a sophisticated form of hunting that involves teamwork, communication and expert timing, testifies to the dolphin's intelligence. Strand fishing, which gets its name because the prey fish are stranded on the shore, occurs along the East Coast only in South Carolina and Georgia. Underwater, small groups of between two and six dolphins, herd fish tightly together into a "bait ball." They then form a line and accelerate to create a bow wave that forces their prey onto shore as they, close behind, surge out of the water in unison.

These sleek swimmers can reach speeds of over 18 miles per hour and can make up to 1,000 clicking noises per second. The clicking sounds are a form of echolocation, aiding the dolphins in their search for food. The sounds travel until they hit an object, then bounce back, giving the dolphin a sense of the location, size, and shape of the target.

Some bottlenose dolphins can remain submerged while holding their breath for 15 minutes. However, they usually dive for just a few minutes at a time. They sleep with one eye open; bottlenose dolphins need to be awake to breathe.

Bottlenose dolphins don't chew. They eat fish and squid, whole - head first to avoid going against the grain of the scales.

➡ *Feeding dolphins is a federal offense. Dolphins are hunters, not beggars - but when people offer them food, dolphins, like most animals, take the easy way out. They learn to beg for a living, lose their fear of humans, and do dangerous things such as swimming too close to boat propellers.*

While most groups migrate seasonally, Lowcountry dolphins enjoy our mild water temperatures year-round, which means anytime is a great time for a dolphin-spotting adventure!



## MANATEES

Manatees (also known as sea cows) search for cooler waters in the hottest months bringing them north, with many making Beaufort County rivers and estuaries their summer homes until fall and winter temperatures send them back to Florida's warmer waters. Our first reports generally come in April or May.

They are herbivores and eat over 60 different freshwater and saltwater plants. They have four rows of teeth and can weigh up to 1,300 pounds.

The manatee and the elephant are closely related to each other. The distinct fingernails on the manatee's flipper look very similar to the elephant's toenails. Also the manatee's small eyes closely resemble the elephant's eyes.

Manatees have no natural predators in the wild. Their main threat comes from humans.

➡ *Boaters at marinas have been known to water manatees with hoses or to feed them. Such practices draw them dangerously close to marinas and boats. The manatee is protected under federal law by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which makes it illegal to harass, hunt, capture or kill any marine mammal.*



Dolphin Strand Feeding



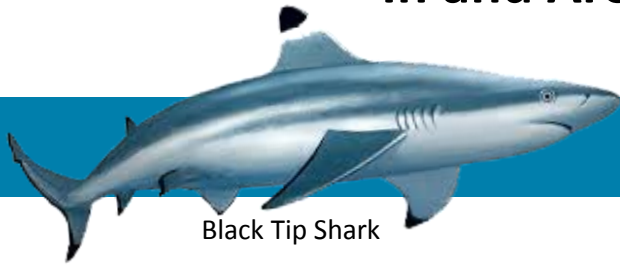
Manatee



Manatee being watered—illegal



# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



Black Tip Shark

## SHARKS

### ***Sharpnose Sharks***

One of the most common shark species caught in the area is the sharpnose shark, a year-round resident of Hilton Head beaches and estuaries. They are considered small sharks, reaching lengths of up to three and a half feet and found in variations of blue, olive, brown and shiny grey. Their skin feels like fine grain sandpaper and have a flattened and long snout. The ends of their pectorals are trailing white, with black tips on their dorsal fins. They have up to 25 rows of teeth on both their upper and lower jaws. During the winter months, sharpnose sharks travel off shore to deeper waters, then return inshore during the spring to reproduce.

### ***Blacktip Sharks***

The blacktip shark has a gray body with black markings on all but the rear bottom fin, closest to the tail. This species grows up to 6 feet. It is found off the East Coast, most commonly located between North Carolina and Texas where they use shallow inshore waters from South Carolina to Texas as nursery areas for their pups in the spring and summer.

### ***Bull Sharks***

Bull sharks, the most dangerous of local shark species, are one of the top three species in the world responsible for unprovoked shark attacks. Bull sharks are known for their aggressive bite, but despite the fact that they're commonly found in Lowcountry waters, they rarely attack humans in South Carolina.

➡ *Local swimmers should be cautious of all shark species, but should be aware that bull sharks that strike are likely to continue attacking until they are punched in the nose or otherwise stopped.*

### ***Sandbar Sharks***

One of the world's largest coastal sharks, sandbar sharks are the most common species swimming along the U.S. Atlantic coast. Although occasionally found in ocean waters, the sandbar sharks tend to prefer relatively shallow coastal waters of the continental shelf, islands, bays, harbors, and estuaries where there are sandy and muddy bottoms. Although they frequent shallow waters, they are rarely seen at the surface. The sandbar shark is a medium sized, classically shaped, full-bodied shark with large dorsal and pectoral fins and sturdy tail. Their snout is bluntly rounded and is shorter than its mouth is wide. Adult animals vary in length from 6.5 feet. to 8 feet. Weight ranges from 100 lbs. to 200 lbs.

➡ *If you're a fisherman, these sharks are caught with longlines, hook-and-line, and set bottom nets, They are also fished with rod and reel by sports anglers as a game fish because of their gritty fighting abilities.*

➡ *Note: Shark fishing from the surf is illegal on Hilton Head Island beaches.*



Bull Shark caught at Edisto Beach, SC

Sharpnose Shark

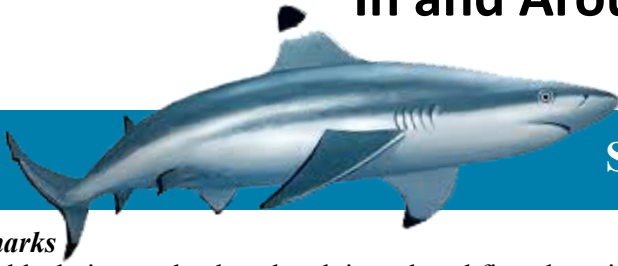


Named for its sharp nose

Sandbar Shark



# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



## SHARKS

### ***Spinner Sharks***

Aside from black tips on the dorsal, pelvic and anal fins, the spinner shark is gray or tinted copper with faint bands of white coloring along the sides of its body. The spinner grows to about 9 feet and is found in coastal waters from Virginia to Florida.

The spinner shark's slim body is essential to its feeding strategy, which involves leaping from the surface of the water. While this shark's jaws are powerful enough to cut through fish and even smaller sharks and squid, the spinner shark is not considered dangerous to humans.

### ***Hammerhead Sharks***

The Hammerhead has a gray body, characterized by a flat, extended head. It grows to about 13 feet and lives in coastal waters from North Carolina to Florida.

### ***Great White Sharks***

It has been estimated that there are approximately 1,000 great whites off the South Carolina coast in the winter time (though there have been sightings other times of the year). The Port Royal Sound, in particular, has been identified by scientists as a hotspot for sharks because of its high salinity and abundant food supply. To follow sharks real time, visit: [www.ocearch.org](http://www.ocearch.org).

### **Shark Safety**

The majority of shark bite incidents are what biologists call “hit-and-run” cases, in which a small coastal shark species mistakes an ankle or foot for a normal food item. Upon realizing their mistake, these sharks usually swim away without causing serious injuries.

- ➡ *On Hilton Head Island, lifeguards post yellow flags or temporarily close the beach for shark sightings.*
- ➡ *Shark fishing from the surf is illegal on Hilton Head beaches.*
- ➡ *If bitten by a shark, seek medical attention.*

The likelihood of being bitten by a shark is very small, but these safety steps may further reduce the odds:

1. Don't swim alone. Like many predators, sharks are more likely to prey on individuals than a group.
2. Don't swim at dawn, dusk, or night, when visibility is lower and sharks may be more active.
3. Avoid wearing jewelry or shiny objects in the water. The metallic glint may look like the silvery scales of a fish.
4. Avoid wearing bright colors. Sharks have keen eyesight underwater and they see contrast particularly well.
5. Avoid swimming near piers and anglers fishing in the surf, where bait may attract sharks.
6. Don't enter the water when schools of baitfish are present. Signs of these small fish, which attract larger predators, include seabirds diving into the water and dolphins feeding.
7. Avoid entering the water if bleeding.
8. Never approach a dorsal fin! Contrary to popular conception, sharks and dolphins do feed in the same areas. If you see fins in the water and cannot safely identify them, stay clear.



Spinner Shark Feeding



Hammerhead Shark



Great White Shark

# In and Around Our Ocean and Beaches



Pygmy Sperm

## WHALES

While it is unlikely that you will spot a whale along our beaches, it is possible during our winter months when they migrate to warmer waters to give birth.

➡ *If you come across a stranded animal during your trip to the beach, officials encourage you to keep a distance and find a beach patrol member or contact the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources toll-free number: 1.800.922.5431.*

### **Pygmy Sperm Whales**

The pygmy sperm whale is not much larger than many dolphins. They are about 3 feet 11 inches at birth, growing to about 11 feet at maturity. Adults weigh about 880 lbs. The underside is a creamy, occasionally pinkish color and the back and sides are a bluish grey. The shark-like head is large in comparison to body size, giving an almost swollen appearance when viewed from the side.

Stranded pygmy sperm whales have often been confused with sharks because the head and lower jaw are somewhat shark-like in appearance. On each side of its head is a light, bracket-shaped mark banded by a darker line that resembles the gill slits of fish; this has been called a "false gill". Just forward of the eye on some of these animals is another light, circular marking. A single blowhole is located above the eyes slightly forward and left of center; the blow is projected forward instead of vertically.

### **Right Whales**

Right whales are so-named because whalers considered them the 'right' whales to hunt - they were easy to approach and catch; floated when dead, and had a lot of oil in the cells of their blubber. North Atlantic right whales are one of the most endangered of the great whales with a worldwide population of fewer than 500.

The North Atlantic right whale is notable for its huge head, which can be more than one quarter the total body length, and a strongly arched mouthline. It has horny growths called callosities mostly on the top of its lower head and lip. The North Atlantic right whale has two blowholes and, as a result of their position, produces a characteristic V-shaped spout up to 16 feet high. It has a heavy, rotund body, black or dark grey, with white blotches on the belly. There is no dorsal fin and the long, broad flippers are paddle-shaped.

### **Short-finned Pilot Whale**

This species is part of the oceanic dolphin family, though its behavior is closer to that of the larger whales.

Pilot whales are large, robust animals with a bulbous head and no discernible beak. The short-finned pilot whale is jet black or dark grey with a grey or white 'saddle-patch' over its back behind the dorsal fin. It has a grey or almost white anchor shaped patch on its chest and a grey or white stripe which goes diagonally upwards behind each eye.

Short-finned pilot whales are highly sociable and are rarely seen alone. They are found in groups of between 15-50 animals, though some pods are as large as 60 individuals.





# Wildlife sighted... In and Around Our C



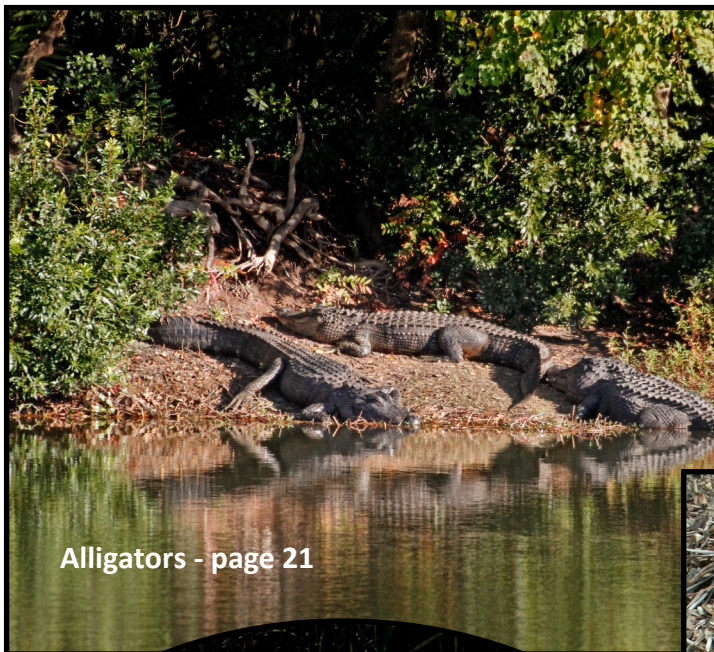
Yellow Bellied Sliders - page 22



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Bald Headed Eagle



Pelican - page 28



Scarlet King Snake - Page 11

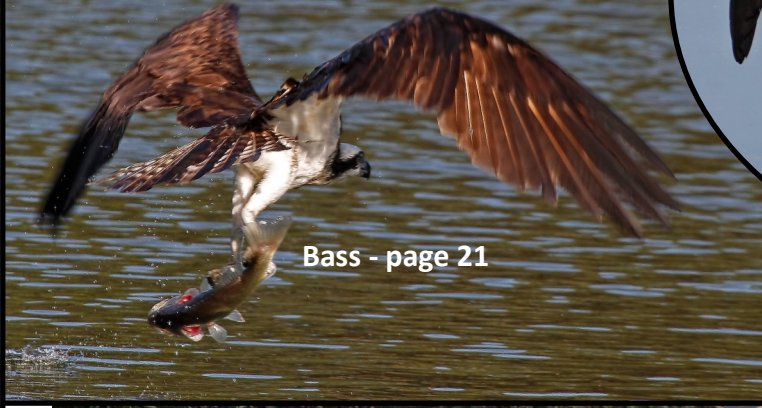


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# Community

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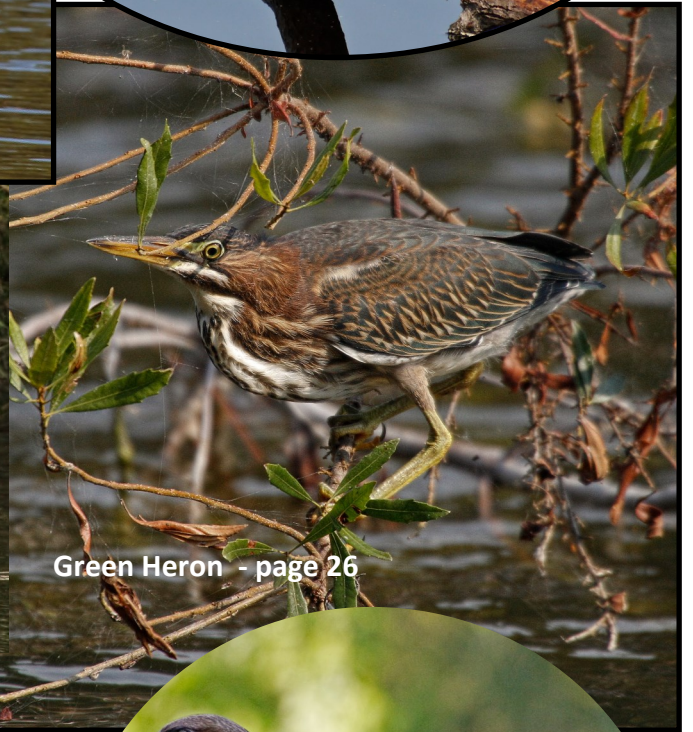
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Great Egret - page 24



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Immature Ibis (page 27) and Little Blue Heron (page 25)



Red Tailed Hawk - page 18

**A special thank you to  
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## At home in our Sea Pines Community

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a **community** to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Aldo Leopold

# Sea Pines

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