



## Seabrook Wild Things

by Members of the Environmental Committee

Warm weather and my favorite Seabrook season, summer, is rapidly approaching. At one point this winter, Judy Morr suggested that a Wild Things article be written on the best environmental activities to enjoy during this busy season. Thank you, Judy; I thought it was a great idea. This is a more casual rather than educational article; based on what I personally enjoy and appreciate about our little slice of paradise. Notice the use of "we" in this article; I hope my thoughts and activities are also enjoyed by other Seabrookers and guests.

One of the most looked forward to activities on Seabrook Island is the beginning of Turtle Season. Nothing is better than the early morning walks, even if a crawl is not found, walkers appreciate the sunrise, birds and dolphin activity. We also take pride in cleaning up litter and other trash on our beach, leaving it as clean as possible for all the beach goers later in the day. In the last half of the season we all are rewarded with hatchlings. Seabrook Island Turtle Patrol does a remarkable job educating residents and visitors on the life cycle and habits of the endangered Loggerhead Turtle. Crowds appear on the beach when a nest is being inventoried, hoping to watch the little babies crawl into the Atlantic. Some families schedule their beach vacation in late July or August just to be able to watch this always inspiring event.

Mornings when I am not walking the beach, my great joy is to watch the sunrise and the early morning animal activity from my screened porch. Most mornings last summer I watched a doe raising her twin fawns, it was remarkable to observe the little guys rapidly grow and gradually lose their spots. This spring the trio is back on my part of the island, fawns are almost fully grown. I wonder when they will be leaving mama and heading out on their own? The dawn hours also bring birds to my feeders. My grandchildren are beginning to enjoy watching and identifying birds and are always amazed to spot our beautiful painted buntings, as am I. We also get a lot of pleasure from the little humming birds and the aggressive male bluebirds protecting the nest in our bluebird box and the large woodpeckers hanging onto the little feeders. In the last year I have watched bob cats, wild turkeys, raccoons, pesky squirrels all over my morning coffee and in the seclusion of the screened porch. And yes please, as naturalists request, I never feed any wild animal except the birds; **a fed animal is a dead animal, we want to keep them wild.**

Although it may not be the prevailing attitude, I do appreciate and respect our resident alligators. Their presence reminds me we do live in amazing

# MINDFUL MEANDERINGS WITH SEABROOK ISLAND WILDLIFE

PHOTOS BY RAY HOOVER / TURTLE HATCHLINGS PHOTO BY ELIZABETH HOOVER SMITH



Turtle Hatchling Crowd



Alligator Wathing YOU



Baby turtles headed out to the ocean



Crab Dock



Great White Egret

environment and not everyone has the opportunity to daily observe these prehistoric looking creatures. Yes, they can be dangerous, enjoy from a distance and **please do not feed or harass.** They have been residents of Seabrook long before we were here.

When grandchildren are visiting, we take several "bike hikes" to Nancy Island. This hummock in the marsh has been protected by The Greenspace Conservancy and is open to casual walkers. After the short walk to the "island" you can get a different perspective of Seabrook Island and neighboring Rockville from the middle of a large marsh. One grandson particularly enjoys finding the little fiddler crabs that scurry around holding up their one large claw in the sandy areas surrounding the island. He will make a "home" for them in a plastic bucket filled with sand, observe and enjoy them for a bit; then return the little fellows to their natural habitat. We also love to taste the Saltwort stems which grow in the marshy areas. On our way to and from Nancy Island we stop and watch the Great White Egrets nesting in the rookery on Jenkins point. Another seemingly exotic scene but right here for us all to enjoy.

Another favorite "bike hike" or walk is to our crab dock and observation deck. On the way to this creek side spot, we stop at the marsh area around the fire station to inventory the birds. There are always several varieties of herons and egrets, sometimes a wood stork and once we even spotted those beautiful Roseate Spoonbills. I enjoy climbing the observation deck, looking over the marsh and spotting the ocean on the other side of the far-off dunes. Ray and I have been known to take a "sippy cup" filled with an adult beverage to enhance sunset views. The children enjoy pulling out crabs, happily they have never caught one large enough to harvest which suits me because I don't think boiling this new "pet" would be acceptable.

And, of course, there is the beach! I can never get enough walking, seeing what has changed since yesterday, collecting shells and chatting with neighbors and their dogs enjoying themselves. After the long walk down to Cap'n Sam's inlet at low tide, frequently we are treated to another "only here" phenomena; dolphin strand feeding. We now have volunteers educating observers on this learned dolphin behavior and how to enjoy but not interfere with this natural marvel.

Seabrook Island has a unique and marvelous environment for us to enjoy and it is our obligation as residents and visitors to protect what is ours to enjoy. This is one of the many reasons we choose to make our home here. ▲

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Environmental Committee