



Winter 2026

Hey there, nature friends! Welcome to the Land Preservation Department's quarterly newsletter! Thank you all so much for your interest in our beautiful parks/preserves, as well as our environmental education program. We are so grateful to work with such a wonderful community of passionate and curious individuals who love the environment just as much as we do. Thank you again for sharing the love!

For this quarter's newsletter, you can find the April schedule for our upcoming environmental education programs, a recap of this winter's happenings, an introduction to a new animal ambassador, and some of the behind the scenes work our department has been up to. We hope you enjoy this read and feel inspiration to join us the next time we take it outside!

April Nature Programs

All programs are free and open to the public with no registration required. For outdoor programs, please bring comfortable walking shoes, a water bottle, bug spray, sunscreen, and binoculars to ensure a safe and fun trip.



APRIL NATURE PROGRAMS

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|------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 4.8 | Birding at Whitehall | 8:30am - 10:30am |
| 4.9 | Trail Talk at Altamaha | 10am - 12pm |
| 4.15 | Birding at Widgeon Point | 8:30am - 10:30am |
| 4.16 | Gator Gander at Crystal Lake | 11am - 12pm |

All programs are FREE to the public, with no registration required.
Please email any questions to the County Naturalist at destiney.rains@bcgov.net and be sure to follow the Land Preservation Department on Facebook and Instagram for future updates and more!

Keep an eye on the Land Preservation Department's new [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages for important weekly updates regarding individual programs.

Winter Nature Program Recap

Over this past Winter, the Land Preservation Department spent lots of time in the field participating in multiple outreach activities around the County, while also hosting fun nature programs. Check out some of the highlighted events below!

Christmas Bird Counts

This winter season, our team participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count, a long-standing community science effort that helps track bird populations across North America.



From early morning walks to careful observations throughout the day, volunteers and staff worked together to document the incredible diversity of bird life across our preserved lands. These counts provide valuable data that help scientists understand long-term population trends, migration patterns, and the health of our ecosystems. Even in the quieter winter months, our landscapes proved to be full of life, reminding us just how important protected spaces are for both resident and migratory species.

Career Day at Port Royal Elementary



In March, we had the opportunity to visit Port Royal Elementary School for Career Day – and we brought some special guests along with us!

The County's Naturalist and her Assistant Naturalist Intern introduced students to the world of naturalists through an up-close look at several of our reptile ambassadors. From scales to survival strategies, students got to experience firsthand what makes these animals so fascinating and important to our ecosystems.

Beyond the animals, they shared what it means to be a naturalist – spending time outdoors, observing wildlife, asking questions, and helping others connect with the natural world. For many students, it was their first glimpse into a career that blends science, education, and a love for nature.

The excitement, curiosity, and thoughtful questions received were a great reminder of why this work matters. Inspiring the next generation to explore, care for, and protect our natural spaces is just as important as the work we do on the land itself.

Meet Groucho

The Diamondback Terrapin



We're excited to introduce one of our newest animal ambassadors: the Diamondback Terrapin!

This unique coastal turtle is specially adapted to life in brackish waters, where salt marshes meet tidal creeks. With their beautifully patterned shells and important role in marsh ecosystems, terrapins are a perfect species to help tell the story of our coastal environments.

Through future programs, you'll have the chance to learn more about their habitat, conservation challenges, and why protecting our marshlands is so critical to their survival.

Land Management Updates

There's a lot more to our department than just nature programs! Check out some of the things we've been up to behind the scenes below!



Prescribed Fires at Pocotaligo

Winter is also prime season for prescribed fire, one of the most important land management tools we use. Over the past few months, our team successfully conducted controlled burns at one of

our managed properties in northern Beaufort County.

These carefully planned fires:

- Reduce hazardous fuel buildup
- Promote the growth of native plant species
- Improve habitat for wildlife
- Maintain the health of fire-adapted ecosystems

While fire can sometimes feel destructive, it plays a vital role in renewing the landscape. Thanks to the expertise and coordination of our staff and partners, these burns were completed safely and effectively ensuring our lands remain resilient for years to come.

Small and Exciting Park Updates

Ford Shell Ring Under Construction



The construction contractor has been hired and they've begun pulling the construction permits.

Stay tuned for a grand opening announcement this Fall of 2026!

Not an actual photo of Ford Shell Rings

[Click here to view the park's conceptual plan.](#)

1st South Carolina Volunteers Park Update

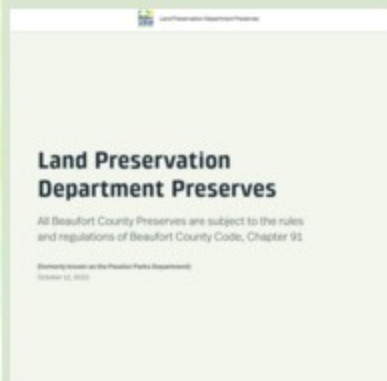
The Land Preservation Department Director is currently working with the City of Beaufort and other stakeholders on future park plans. Stay tuned for future updates!



[To learn more about the 1st South Carolina Volunteers click here.](#)

Let's Stay Connected!

Are you interested in visiting any of the Land Preservation Department's passive parks and public preserves? Click on the story map image on the left to virtually explore properties both North and South of the Broad River.



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