

FOOTPRINTS & PADDLEDRIPS

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February 2000

The Georgia Nature-Based Tourism Association



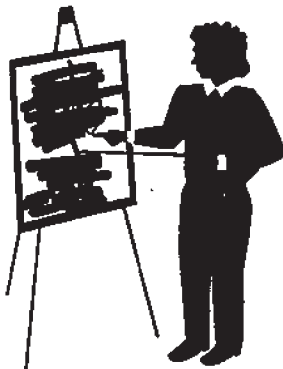
Come to St. Simons Island February Business Meeting to be Hosted by Coastal Encounters

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held February 15 on St. Simons Island at Coastal Encounters located in the Old Coast Guard Station beginning at 10:00 AM.

Committees will meet from 9-10:00 over coffee. All others are invited to coffee and talk between 9-10:00 AM.

See directions to right →



February Meeting Agenda

- 9-10:00 AM - Coffee and Talk
- 9-10:00 Committee Meetings
- 10:00 AM - Welcome -
Sheila Willis and Cate Tobler
- Introductions and Current Events
- Secretary's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Committee Reports
- 11:00 Other Business
- Introduction of Special Guest:
Dylan, baby loggerhead sea turtle
- Noon - Lunch
- 1:00 - 3:00 Marsh Walk. Wear shoes you can get muddy!

Directions to Coastal Encounters Nature Center: Cross bridge to St. Simons Island (35¢ fee). At light at the end of the causeway bear right onto Kings Way, which turns into Ocean Blvd. Stay on Ocean Blvd. past the Village to the stop sign. Turn right at the yield sign and keep going until you come to the old Coast Guard Station on East Beach. Park in front of the big building and go around back to the little building. If you need further directions or get lost, call Coastal Encounters at 912-634-1176.

Association member Coastal Encounters is a hands-on environmental education center, with aquariums and touch tanks. They conduct marsh and beach study walks, slide presentations for families, schools, scouts, and elderhostel groups. Plan on attending the February meeting to become familiar with this nature-based business.

President's Message

Enclosed with this newsletter, the association is proud to present its new marketing brochure. The brochure was developed by the efforts of the ad-hoc Brochure Committee, consisting of Lynn Carter, Chip Campbell, and myself. Billy Brantley, owner of association member Obediah's Okefenok, and Brantley Printing of Waycross, GA (www.brantleyprinting.com) prepared and printed the brochure, with funds provided by the Sapelo Foundation grant. Thanks to the Brantley Printing staff for the excellent work done and extraordinary effort extended to produce this brochure in time for the February Earth Kinship 2000 Conference in Jacksonville. Thanks to the PR committee for obtaining an appropriate logo reflecting our nature-based theme from Alison Clement. This is an example of how the association can work with its members for the benefit of both. In the coming weeks, the association will be receiving its letterhead stationery, another example of how the association is moving forward due to the combined efforts of various members.

Bring Your Mug

Don't forget to bring your coffee mug to association meetings to enjoy our early morning coffee and talk time! By providing your own mug at each meeting, you will help eliminate the use of Styrofoam, a major polluter of the environment.



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The Georgia Nature-Based
Tourism Association
Box 305
Folkston, GA 31537

Association Officers

- Sheila Willis
1-912-285-0419
- Lynn Carter
1-912-367-7731
- Beth Nunley
1-912-232-0032
- Gemma Wangsness
1-912-496-3764

Training Session

The first quarterly training session offered by the association was held on January 18 in the Folkston Depot. Expert birder Sheila Willis presented colored slides of backyard birds, describing their habits and giving identification tips. National Wildlife Federation's Vicki Seastrom gave a presentation on backyard habitats for wildlife. (See related article in this issue.) Those attending the session were given free information packets by the NWF and throughout the afternoon drawings were held for door prizes, which included hummingbird feeders, bird houses, and posters.

Dick Jackson of Canoeport described his livery service on the St. Marys River. Dick also led a discussion session on efforts to preserve the river (see article on St. Marys River Cleanup Celebration in this newsletter).

Thanks to association members Sheila, Vicki, and Dick for their excellent presentations and for their support of association programs.

National Wildlife Federation Marks 25,000 Habitats

From the February/March 2000 National Wildlife Magazine: "NWF recently celebrated certification of its 25,000th Backyard Wildlife Habitat site."

Thanks to Vicki Seastrom of association member NWF Atlanta for introducing our members to this innovative program. For more information on how to create and certify your own Backyard Wildlife Habitat project, see www.nwf.org/habitats.

Jazz & Blues Festival

Lynn Carter reports the Arts Council of Appling County will sponsor The Ditchwater Jazz & Blues Festival at the A. Randall Tuten Environmental Park outdoor amphitheater on Saturday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m., Baxley, Georgia. For ticket information call 912-367-7731.

Wings Over the Swamp

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is holding its annual festival to celebrate the refuge's 234 species of birds on February 12 from 6:30 a.m. until after dark. The event includes an early bird boat tour, a guided boardwalk bird walk hosted by the Okefenokee Bird Club, a presentation by Doris Mager, the Eagle Lady, an owl prowls at dusk and much much more. For information on boat tours, call 912-496-7156. For info on other activities, call 912-496-7836.

Reservations for an early morning bird watching by canoe tour can be made by calling 912-496-4834 (reservations and a fee are required for this tour).

Ladies Kayak/Camping/Yoga Trip

Southeast Adventure Outfitters are sponsoring a 3 day, 2 night trip for women only on March 17-19. Limited to 10 participants, 2 guides and yoga instructor. \$400 fee includes meals, snacks, camping and kayaking gear, kayak and yoga instruction along the trip. Yoga in the morning, breakfast, paddle, stop for lunch, paddle to camp, do more yoga, dinner, etc. Moderate paddling. Leaves from Altamaha Park, NW of Darien. Call Cindy Janus, 912-638-6732.

Groundhog Day Report for Georgia

In case you missed it, General Beauregard Lee has predicted an early spring in Georgia, and *The Georgia Times-Union* reported that General Lee has predicted correctly nine out of ten times in the past ten years! Let's hope we quickly get some good spring rains to help us out of the current drought hurting many association businesses.

Okefenokee Highlight

Look for an article by Mel White on crossing the Okefenokee by canoe with outfitter Sheila Carter in the January-February issue of National Geographic Traveler, now on newsstands. Included is a comprehensive guide to the Okefenokee by Richard J. Lenz, with listings of association members Okefenokee Pastimes, The Inn at Folkston, Stephen C. Foster State Park, Suwannee Canal Recreation, and Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce. Congratulations to all our members on this great publicity, and thanks to National Geographic Traveler.

Canoe Trip

General Coffee State Park, 46 John Coffee Road, Nicholls, is sponsoring a canoe trip on March 11, at 8:00 a.m..

Pre-registration is required, \$10 per person with own canoe; \$15 per person for the use of a park canoe. To register, call 912-384-7082.



News Media Directory

Vice-President Lynn Carter provides the following information for any businesses interested in purchasing a copy of the Georgia News Media Directory. Mail a check for \$30 to the following address:

Georgia News Media Directory
Georgia Press Association
3066 Mercer University Drive, Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30341

For information call 770-454-6776.

The association is purchasing a copy of this guide as a reference for our members.

Committee Chairs' Reminders

If you are unable to attend a meeting, or you will be significantly detained, determine which fellow committee members are planning to attend and designate an informed replacement.

Membership Renewal

It's time for our annual renewals and membership drive. We encourage everyone who receives the association newsletter to join and spread the word to your friends about the benefits of association membership.

Enclosed is a membership application/renewal. If you have already sent us your form, a "00" on the address label indicates we have received your application/renewal. Pass the association brochure on to a friend for membership application.

Association Scrapbook

We are collecting media coverage, photos, and other news and information about association events for a scrapbook that will be available for viewing at the general meeting. Send items of interest to the post office box or bring them to a meeting.

St. Marys River Cleanup

The St. Marys River Cleanup Celebration will be held on March 18 in Camden and Charlton counties in Georgia and in Nassau and Baker counties in Florida, from 8 a.m. until noon. A celebration will follow. Contact Dean Woehrle at 904-879-3498, or Kim Snyder at 904-277-2701, or 1-800-298-4850 to find out where and how you can help in this important annual environmental cleanup.

Send Us Your Events

If you have any events that would be of interest to association members, call Genna Wangsness at 912-496-3764, fax 912-496-6256, or send to the P.O. Box for publication in upcoming newsletters.

Marketing Tools

Bring your business cards and brochures to meetings to introduce yourself to fellow business owners, visitor center reps, chambers of commerce, etc. Use this opportunity to network with others who can help send business your way!

Ways & Means

The Ways & Means Committee is working on funding grants for the association to help with ongoing expenses. If you know of any company, foundation, or other source where we can apply for a grant, call Jim Burkhart at 912-496-7366, ext. 233.

Committees at Work

Jay Campbell has assumed the role of Public Relations Chair, replacing Karen Arms. Jennifer Rachels is one her way to the Peace Corps this month and thus the Inventory Committee Chair position is vacant. Thanks to Karen and Jennifer for their work as committee chairs and thanks to Joy for assuming the role of chair. Contact Sheila Willis if you are interested in chairing the Inventory Committee. The association needs your input to be successful. Join a committee and contribute your energy in a worthwhile effort to help the association grow. Call one of the following to join.

Ways/Means

Jim Burkhart 912-496-7366, ext. 233

Membership

Lynn Carter 912-367-7731
lscarter@applingdacoc.com

Public Relations

Joy Campbell
swampman@gloryroad.net

Inventory

Vacant

Audit/Finance

Beth Nunley 912-232-0032
bnunley@tootsytours.com

For Backyard Birders

If you've noticed the Eurasian Collared Dove showing up at your feeder, you might be interested in the article in February *Birder's World* about its rapid expansion into new territories.
www.birdersworld.com.

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's *Birdscope*, Winter 2000, Vol. 14, No. 1, also has an update on this dove's spread. www.birds.cornell.edu.

Membership Drive

If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining the Georgia Nature-Based Tourism Association, contact Lynn Carter with the information. Lynn's number is 912-367-7731, and her E-mail is lscarter@applingdacoc.com.

Year 2000 Schedule

Association meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month. We are in the process of planning for the year and arranging for meetings at the following locations. Please mark your calendars.

NOTE: All dates and locations are subject to change due to scheduling conflicts. Watch the newsletter for any updates.

February 15 - Coastal Encounters

March 21 - Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Museum and Nature Center, Savannah

May 16 - Baxley-Appling Board of Tourism, Baxley

June 20 - Cumberland Island Inn & Suites, St. Marys

July 18 - Tootsy Tours, Savannah
 September 19 - Jekyll Island Villa Ospe

October 17 - Stephen Foster St. Pk

November 21 - General Coffee St. Pk

The association attempts to highlight different areas of the state and promote member businesses by moving the meetings to a new location each month. Thanks to all who have generously offered to hold a meeting at their location.

Thanks

Thanks to Sheila's dad Robert Willis for crafting a beautiful cedar base to be used with the association gavel when opening the association meetings

Officer Meetings

Officers have scheduled the following meetings. If you have concerns or items of interest you would like the board to consider, please let Sheila Willis know by the Friday before the scheduled meeting.

March 1	May 3
June 7	July 5
September 6	October 4
November 1	

Web Site Request for Proposals

Request for proposals (RFPs) to design and/or host a web site for the Georgia Nature-Based Tourism Association have been sent to vendors selected by the executive committee and committee chairs. The deadline for submission of bids is February 14. The RFPs will be reviewed and a decision made in the near future. Look for the GNBA web site to be up and running by mid-year.

From the Sierra Club Store

www.sierraclub.org/books

Seven Wonders: Timeless Tools for a Healthier Planet by John C. Ryan. The essential guide to simple actions you can take to reduce environmental damage by using alternative "wonders," among which are bicycles, ceiling fans, and pad thai. (Sierra Club Magazine, Jan-Feb 2000)

Conservation Directory

The 2000 edition of the National Wildlife's Conservation Directory is available by calling The Lyons Press, 1-800-836-0510. The directory lists more than 3,000 federal, state and international government agencies; and international, national and regional organizations and commissions.

Welcome New Members

Welcome to the following new members. A number of new members attending the January meeting in Folkston offered to host upcoming meetings as well as serve on committees. Thanks, we look forward to working with you!

Coastal Encounters Nature Center
St. Simons Island
www.coastalencounter@mindspring.com
Bull River Cruises
Savannah
www.bullriver.com
Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce
Folkston
www.folkston.com
Little St. Simons Island
St. Simons Island
www.littlestsimonsisland.com
Spencer House Inn B&B
St. Marys
www.spencerhouseinn.com
St. Marys Tourism Council
St. Marys
www.stmaryswelcome.com
Cumberland Island Inn & Suites
St. Marys
www.cumberlandislandinn.com
Lydia C. Thompson
St. Simons Island
www.thebest.net/artworksbylydia

Thanks also to all those who have sent in their renewals. If you haven't yet joined or renewed your membership, take the time to do it now before you forget!

Baxley Tree Fest

Association member Baxley-Appling County Chamber of Commerce announces their Baxley Tree Fest on April 13-15. Voted the "Best Festival in the State" in 1997 and 1998. Over 30 events, including street dance on April 14 at 8:00 pm with the "Swingin' Medallions." For booth/festival information, call the chamber at 912-367-7731.

Okefenokee Education and Research Center: Board Passes Resolution Authorizing GWF to Operate OERC

By Pamela P. Holliday

Part of the "no mining" collaborative agreement reached between the DuPont Company, environmental critics, and local leaders in the Okefenokee Swamp included establishing the Okefenokee Education and Research Center (OERC) in Folkston. While details surrounding DuPont's mineral rights and land acquisition issues continue to be debated, plans for the OERC are moving forward. On November 4, 1999, the GWF Board unanimously approved a resolution stating that, provided appropriate funds are available and GWF is invited to participate, the Georgia Wildlife Federation will operate the OERC.

GWF President Jerry McCollum says, "With the Board's support, I have told the OERC Interim Coordination Committee that GWF will run the center. The committee wants us to, so the key now will be finding funding."

In December 1999, McCollum and Folkston Mayor Dixie McGurn kicked off a campaign to raise \$10 million to build the research center. They are hopeful they will receive generous state funding as well as corporate donations.

The OERC is planned as a specialized center to promote education and research at the Okefenokee Swamp. The facility would consist of three historic, downtown Folkston school buildings, which would be renovated to house

OERC's education, interpretive, and research activities. An outdoor classroom would also be on the grounds.

Folkston is the gateway to the swamp and the largest town in Charlton County, one of the state's poorest. Some 400,000 people pass through Charlton County each year to visit the Okefenokee, but they don't stay long. With the addition of the OERC, people might extend their stay and spend more tourist dollars in rural south Georgia.

McCollum says, "The OERC promises to offer the Okefenokee area local jobs, the chance to renovate historic buildings, and elementary and secondary educational opportunities. It's a winning situation for the swamp and the local community."

GWF will develop and operate the OERC in cooperation with the National Wildlife Federation, the Georgia Conservancy, DuPont, the City of Folkston, the University of Georgia, and Georgia Southern University. In December 1999, members began to be appointed to the Interim Coordination Committee, chaired by McCollum and McGurn, and the committee began meeting.

The cornerstone of the OERC's education and tourism programs will be Discovery Hall, an eyes-on and hands-on interpretive center that will showcase the region's natural, cultural, and historical heritage. The OERC facility will also include a welcome center and gift shop, an auditorium/theater, and a restaurant specializing in local cuisine and local fresh produce. The Research Building will house individual and centralized laboratories. A key component of the education curriculum at the OERC will be to

involve upper elementary, middle, and high school students and their teachers in the research projects in the Okefenokee region.

Because of its size and budget, the OERC will be implemented over time. Phase I of the implementation, Funding, Initial Planning, and Hiring, will be completed in 2000. Phase II, Construction and Start-up, is scheduled for 2001-2002, and Phase III, Full-Scale Operation and Program Expansion will begin in 2003.

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