



ANNUAL REPORT
2024

The Palmetto Bluff Conservancy is an independent, not-for-profit organization created to conserve the natural and cultural resources of Palmetto Bluff. The Conservancy is dedicated to stewardship, planning, conservation, and management of Palmetto Bluff's land, water, wetlands, open spaces, ecosystems, and archaeological sites for the benefit of present and future generations. It is, essentially, the keeper of the natural and historical world at Palmetto Bluff.

OUR VISION

- To protect the natural diversity and beauty of Palmetto Bluff by preserving ecologically and historically significant areas.
- To promote appreciation and understanding of our past and of the environment through education and special events.
- To contribute to the knowledge of the Lowcountry's ecology and history through research.
- To act as stewards of the natural, cultural, and historical resources of Palmetto Bluff.
- To provide a voice for conservation in our community.
- To become an economically sustainable and resilient organization capable of managing this property in perpetuity.





Letter from the Director

I am sitting here on River Road watching the red maples bloom and wondering where 2024 went.

The Conservancy had a great year, and we are looking forward to 2025 and all the new offerings we have for property owners. In 2024, we had over three hundred events scheduled to provide a multitude of opportunities for people to join us in the woods. This year, we are creating more experiences like Hidden Happy Hour that will share parts of the Bluff only available through the Conservancy.

The wildlife and forestry management team were able to hit our burning goals for 2024. The burns included hardwood reduction as well as improving and maintaining habitat for wildlife. A new program under wildlife management in 2024 was Dawn Chorus, where property owners joined us out in the woods before daylight as we listened to the world wake up around us. Spring has always been my favorite time on the Bluff, and I'm usually out every day listening to my own Dawn Chorus. Our heathy herd management had better results than 2023 and feral hog control went well, with more pigs removed than in the year prior.

The Conservancy works together with Palmetto Bluff's Archaeology team to maintain most of the cemeteries on property. The head Archaeologist, Katie Epps, and her team did a fantastic job with the new and recurring historical and cultural programs they provided for the Bluff.

I am excited about this year and expect more turnout for our programs. I am also very proud of our team and watching how we work for each other, the wildlife, the land, and finally for you.

Have a great 2025 and looking forward to seeing you,

Jay

Director
Palmetto Bluff Conservancy



In February, the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy was the host organization for this year's annual meeting of the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network on Hilton Head Island. This conference brought together agencies, academics, consultants, and non-profits to discuss research and conservation of bats and other mammals in the Southeast.

The three-year term for Sam Holst, Conservancy Research Fellow, ended this April and he has transitioned to working for Georgia Department of Natural Resources. His position with the Conservancy was fully funded through a gracious donation from the Friends of the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy, and he is definitely missed. Part of his time here was spent studying the roosting ecology of Seminole bats. The first of two research articles was published this past year. The second article will be published within the next year.

Because bats are notoriously difficult to catch, the sheer number of hours required to collect a decent sample size can be difficult to sustain with our current staff. Your charitable gifts made it possible for the Conservancy to maintain a contract with Jason Robinson, a key collaborator in our effort to monitor northern long-eared bats, which is a federal endangered species, as well as tri-colored bats, which is a species proposed for endangered listing.

We completed field work for the second year of a study evaluating the effects of landscape-level changes on bird communities. This is a project that is wholly funded by the Friends of the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy and is a collaborative endeavor with the Avian Research and Conservation Institute. We extended this initial project to include how landscape characteristics influence bat communities. In collaboration with Kerrigan Larkin, graduate student at Kennesaw State University, we initiated a project using bat acoustic detectors to quantify bat activity at various locations within Palmetto Bluff, Sun City, Spring Island, Brays Island, and Nemours Wildlife Foundation. Kerrigan will then compare overall bat activity and activity of specific species to landscape features such as forest patch size, light pollution, and ratio of residential land to forested land. We eagerly await her results.



The Palmetto Bluff Conservancy conducted 307 programs in 2024. This high quantity of programming was to provide multiple opportunities for people to join Conservancy outings. Unfortunately, we saw low attendance throughout 2024. In addition to our planned events, we led an additional 33 special events for outside organizations, fellow nonprofits, private groups, and schools. Below is a breakdown of participation in 2024.

Overall Programs

- 544 unique individuals participated in Conservancy programs.
- 60% of unique participants were members.
- 24% of participants only attended lectures.
- 38% of participants attended two or more programs.
- Average overall attendance for events in 2024 was 35% of their max capacity.

Lectures

- 33 formal and informal lectures conducted in 2024
- Lectures saw an average of 15 in-person participants.
- 67% of lecture attendees were members and their guests.
- 29% of total attendance occurred through Zoom.

The historical and ecological topics we covered in 2024 helped broaden participants' understanding and appreciation of the South Carolina Lowcountry. New programs this year included Breaking it Down, Lowcountry Flora, Let's Talk About, Under the Microscope, Nature Crafts, and Edibles, Medicinals, and Other Uses of Plants. Your contributions allowed us to acquire new materials for these programs and cover reoccurring expenses. Our Zoom Webinar subscription opens our lectures and FeederWatch programs to a wider audience, including seasonal residents who may be away from the Bluff, but still wish to attend our Brown Bag Lunch programs.

The Conservancy advocates for landscaping with native plants and we maintain two garden beds by the Conservancy Classroom planted with roughly 55 different native plant species. We use these beds and native plant programs to help encourage people to make a difference in their own backyards and provide valuable habitat for birds, insects, and bats which are facing severe declines due to habitat loss. Your contributions allowed us to purchase new plants for the gardens and a recording of the 2024 Ecological Gardening Summit where we hosted a free viewing party that included a native plant seed giveaway.

Your continued support allows us to diversify and improve the educational experiences the Conservancy offers to residents, schools, and the Beaufort County community.



Protecting the Eastern Wild Turkey: A Palmetto Bluff Conservancy Effort

Eastern wild turkeys are a remarkable and iconic species that thrive in our local forests and green spaces. Once facing extinction due to habitat destruction and overhunting, conservation efforts have successfully restored their populations. However, continued habitat loss, predation, and disease still threaten their survival.

At Palmetto Bluff, the Conservancy practices selective hunting measures. As leaders in conservation, we were one of the first properties in South Carolina to implement a practice of limiting harvests to only mature gobblers as well as restricting the hunting season to exclude March hunts. State regulations have followed suit as these methods have been proven to help turkey populations throughout the state.

Your contributions helped the Conservancy cover costs associated with wild turkey management, and by managing land for wild turkey, we promote diverse habitats for a variety of species. Prescribed burns, native grass plantings, and forest thinning create early successional habitats that benefit small mammals and songbirds like the indigo bunting and eastern towhee. White-tailed deer and gray squirrels rely on the same acorn-producing oak trees that turkeys use for food, especially in fall and winter. Meanwhile, the increased insect populations that flourish in managed areas support amphibians like frogs and toads, as well as pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Even reptiles like box turtles and skinks thrive in the warm, open spaces created by controlled burns. Lastly, all the native wildlife and habitats benefit from our feral hog removal efforts. By managing land with turkeys in mind, Palmetto Bluff Conservancy fosters biodiversity and improves ecosystem health for a wide range of native wildlife. The conservation of wild turkeys is a shared responsibility, and by protecting and managing habitats, addressing predator concerns, and supporting responsible hunting practices, Palmetto Bluff property owners can contribute to sustaining this species for generations to come.



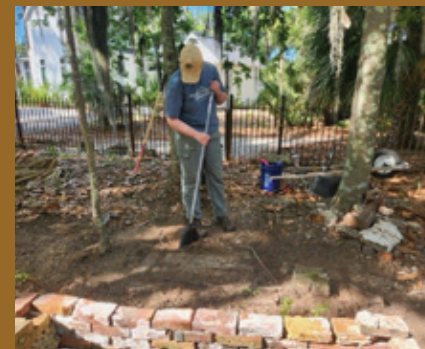
Your donations allowed us to start the restoration of the Proctor-Screven Cemetery in Moreland and to continue maintenance of the other cemeteries.

With Frank Genello of the American Building Restoration Company, Palmetto Bluff's Archaeology Team located most of the missing stone from the top of the box tomb and cleaned it in preparation for gluing.

While locating the missing stone fragments, another box tomb was identified, which will be assessed for restoration next year.

The Conservancy's regular maintenance of the cemeteries at Palmetto Bluff includes removing debris and trash and cleaning the headstones and memorials by the Archaeology Team.

Join us on one of our monthly walks to the Montpelier and Octagon cemeteries to learn more.





The following accomplishments were not funded by donations.

The Conservancy continued to be involved in final inspections for the Design Review Board and assist with questions and protocols related to tree removal. We continued to educate residents on what can and cannot be done within the RPOD. We acted as the liaison between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, residents, and the sales team regarding all eagle questions, zoning, and permitting.

The Conservancy continued to be a voice at the development table in relation to road stake outs, lot layouts, and recognizing the natural features in areas being discussed for development.





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Zoe Klauck, Archaeological Technician [8]
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2024 TEMPORARY STAFF AND INTERNS:

Sam Holst, Research Fellow [7]



In 2024, the Conservancy said goodbye to Dr. Mary Socci and Lydia Moore. Mary's contribution to history, archaeology and the integral running of the Conservancy has been vital. Lydia's work on research and education offered world class projects and programs at Palmetto Bluff. Both will be missed, but we are excited for their work at Wormsloe.



At the same time, we are excited to welcome Sara Bales Lyda to the team as Assistant Director where she will assist Jay with implementing the operational elements of the Conservancy, and re-introducing herself to the land where she was raised.



Preservation TRUST



SOUTH STREET PARTNERS

Friends of the Conservancy

Special thanks are due to the Friends of the Conservancy for the extraordinary support over many years, including 2024. The Friends of the Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides funding for several of the Conservancy's projects. The financial assistance of the Friends has helped the Conservancy track swallow-tailed kites from the Bluff to South America and back. In 2021, the Friends of the Conservancy funded Sam Holst's position as the Conservancy Research Fellow, and they were generous enough to continue funding him for an additional two years. In 2022, The Conservancy began a new project in collaboration with the Avian Research and Conservation Institute and the assistance of the Friends of the Conservancy. The new project will help us evaluate how land use changes affect sensitive species. Thanks to the Friends of the Conservancy, our research has been able to reach new heights that it was unable to obtain in the past.

North American Land Trust

In 1992, Andrew L. Johnson and a dedicated group of professionals established the North American Land Trust (NALT) with the primary purpose of preserving and managing open space with ecological, agricultural, or historical significance. NALT was formed to fill a specific niche within the conservation movement – it balanced conservation and land development, a marriage that was essentially unheard of among land trusts at the time. Emphasizing stewardship and alternative development designs, NALT adopted a very specific mission: to serve the natural landscape and the landowner in the best way possible. Remaining true to these ideals, the North American Land Trust continues to refine and expand on these conservation goals. In 1992, Mr. Johnson and the original visionaries for Palmetto Bluff partnered to create the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy, technically a subsidiary of NALT, as a means of advancing land conservation and natural resource stewardship in the region. With over 130,000 acres protected to date, NALT works with landowners all over the United States – from the Pacific Northwest to New England. Its work is particularly focused in the Southeast, a region with a high concentration of imperiled species threatened by development.





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OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE PALMETTO BLUFF CONSERVANCY



Financial support by both individuals and businesses is vital to the success of the Conservancy. Here are some of the many ways you can support our work:

- Charitable gifts are one of the most important means of support for Palmetto Bluff Conservancy. Direct gifts or participation in fundraising events are two of the keys to our survival.
- The Conservancy started a fundraiser in 2017 that continued to do extremely well in 2018. The Adopt-A-Box bluebird project was the brainchild of PB resident, Steve Harrington. Mr. Harrington not only proposed the idea, he supplied all the wood and constructed the initial boxes free of charge. Thank you very much, Mr. Harrington, for supporting the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy and for your love of Palmetto Bluff.
- Property owners who are a part of the Conservancy's hunting email list can donate to the Adopt-a-Plot program. Contributions through this program go directly towards equipment and supplies for land and wildlife management.
- Directed gifts from foundations and institutional investments, including gifts of stocks or securities, are always welcome.
- A long-term goal of the Conservancy is to acquire land to be placed in conservation in perpetuity. Your charitable donation can help us attain this goal and help us establish land for conservation and wildlife.

Sponsorships:

- Business and individuals can sponsor an event, a program, or other offering. Call the Conservancy at (843) 706-6465 to learn more.

Legacy Gifts and Planned Giving:

- A gift of cash or real estate made as part of a will or living trust benefits you, your loved ones, and the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy. Two of the simplest legacy gifts can be made as a bequest through your will or trust, or through a beneficiary designation of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, bank account, brokerage account, or certificates of deposit.

Please consult your financial advisor or tax advisor to explore planned giving options.

(Please note that Preservation Trust dues are the homeowners' association fees. They do not go to the Conservancy.)