



# FRESpace Findings

Fall/Winter 2020

## President's Report

Who would have thought a virus could have wrought such an ongoing impact to our daily lives? FRESpace board meetings have been conducted virtually, and funding requests authorized via email. The Park staff have made numerous improvements to facilities and to Environmental Learning Center displays. While in-person programs have been curtailed, the staff have developed virtual events available for viewing on the internet.

Even with COVID and Tropical Storm Isaias, our Sea Turtle Specialist Leah Schwartzenruber and her interns Aidan and Rylie managed another successful season. The laying season ended with 181 nests, fewer than last year's record of 351, but greater than the numbers in 2017 and 2018. This is not unexpected since turtles take a year or two off between nesting seasons. Isaias was a concern. Fortunately, we only lost 3 nests. As of September 6, we had over 10,998 emerged hatchlings with 25 nests yet to hatch. Nightwalks were conducted with fewer participants due to COVID. Thanks to Leah, her interns, and volunteers for their service.

While volunteer opportunities have been limited, volunteers have helped with the turtle project and building a terrapin exhibit for the ELC, and the Blowhards continued to help maintain the trails. Projects funded this season by FRESpace include providing bird feed for the ELC bird sanctuary, renewing membership in the Edisto Chamber of Commerce, new Sea Turtle Safety signs for the beach accesses, repair of the Blowhards' cart,

and support of new and upgraded exhibits at the ELC. Please stop by the ELC and see all the improvements that Sam, Lucas, Pat and interns Carley and Annie have accomplished. The ELC is open five days a week (Tuesday - Saturday).



Our membership continues to be high with a solid renewal rate. Currently, we have 450 members and 16 corporate sponsors: Carolina One Sea Island Realty, Charleston Fossil Adventures; Edisto Bike Rentals; Edisto Kennels; Edisto Saltwater Tours; Edisto Watersports and Tackle; The Edistonian; Green Boat Discount Liquors; Home Advantage Realty; The Joggle Factory; Kennerty Surveying; McConkey's Jungle Shack; Mueller Electric Corporation; Russ Hewitt State Farm Insurance; Slo Boat Construction; and Tyler A.

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Smyth Architects. Please patronize and thank them for their support. Also, check your hangtag for the expiration date of your membership.

On our Facebook page, we have 4,735 people “liking” us and 4,913 following us, a 15% increase over the previous year. Please visit our website at [www.frespace.org](http://www.frespace.org), and “like” us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/frespace](http://www.facebook.com/frespace),

Thanks to each of you for your support. Together, we are making a difference.

*Bill Andrews, FRESpace President*

### **Park Manager’s Report**

It has been an interesting summer season to say the least! The park was closed from the end of March until mid-May due to COVID to slow the spread. On May 1, the park reopened to campers and cabin reservations. On May 15, we opened the day-use area and beach accesses to the general public. During that time, the park had only essential personnel working, and spending was brought down to the essentials for reduced operation. We used that time to develop cleaning standards and place prevention measures to ensure the safety of our employees as well as our guests. We also caught up on needed improvements. Since the park reopened on May 1, we have been very busy with campers, cabins, and day-use.

Since the last newsletter, we have had some personnel changes. R.T. Haithcock, our Maintenance Supervisor, accepted a job with the Charleston County School District. We replaced him with Darrin Moore, who was serving as our Assistance Maintenance Supervisor. Darrin brings a new eye perspective that has been instrumental in the transition. We are looking to hire a new Assistant Maintenance Supervisor. During our closure, we

let our part-time staff go, but were fortunate to have them return in preparation of re-opening.

Sadly, the park service canceled all in-person programs and events. The Environmental Learning Center staff conducted virtual programs through Facebook Live. These videos are available at [www.youtube.com/user/SCStateParks/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/SCStateParks/videos) (Look for references to Edisto or Ranger Sam). Unfortunately, we were not able to host our annual Easter Egg Hunt or the Turtlefest due to COVID. Programming is cancelled until the end of the year. As we approach 2021, we will assess the COVID situation and determine when we can bring back programs.

We have been working towards finishing up projects that FRESpace has graciously funded. The Pelt display is up and looks great. All that is left is to install labels identifying the pelts with informational tidbits about the animals. We have had a volunteer, OB, constructing the Turtle exhibit that will be located between the Alligator and the Shrimp boat exhibits. We hope to have it installed and ready to go before October arrives. This exhibit will allow us to illustrate all the different environments our native turtle species inhabit. The new Sea Turtle signs are installed at all beach accesses. Leah, our Sea Turtle Specialist, did a fantastic job designing new signs that fit the park’s needs in educating our guests about sea turtle season.

During this time, we had a scare with Hurricane Isaias. Luckily, we did not have to evacuate, and it stayed out at sea. We did not receive any damage while it passed. We are now in the peak of hurricane season and continue to monitor developments. As always, thank y’all for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you out in the park, as well as in our great community

here at Edisto Beach!

*Kyle Bullock, Park Manager*

## **Interpretive Ranger's Report**

What a year it has been so far! A lot has happened since the last update. The summer of 2020 has been different from any other. It started with the park closure the end of March due to COVID, and when we reopened in May, we knew it was going to be an unusual summer with new guidelines we had to adjust to. It was a busy season in an unconventional way!

At the ELC, we were fortunate to have interns and staff despite having no programs. Our educational interns, Carley and Annie, were an incredible addition. During their time here, they completed a number of projects. The four drawers of the ACE Basin habitat cross-section needed updating. Annie and Carley transformed those drawers into a fun, interactive feature. They also updated our fish ID signage throughout the building, so it is more informative and easier to read. We were fortunate to have sea turtle interns, Aidan and Rylie who were a great addition with our day to day activities and small projects. I am so grateful for their help this season.

Even though we aren't able to do face-to-face programs at this time, we have been doing virtual programs on Facebook for SC State Parks and will continue to do so. I filmed a fish-feeding, turtle talk and some craft videos throughout the summer. Lucas will film a segment on the Bache Monument and Spanish Mount in the future so be on the lookout for those! Leah filmed a sea turtle inventory earlier this summer that was a hit. If you haven't tuned into them, definitely check them out.

During this strange time, we've focused on improvements at the ELC. Next time you visit,

things may look a little different. We shifted the front room around and added a retail stand which includes ELC apparel and plush animals. We plan to add more retail in the future. In the past, we've had complications with our main tank and last month, we were able to resolve it. Our main tank is now fully functional and full of fish. We have quite a few FRESpace funded projects including a beautiful pelt display and a touch screen display for our Marine Ecology exhibit. We are in the process of getting touch tank covers, and our new turtle exhibit is currently being built. Thank you to FRESpace for funding these improvements.



*Pelt Display Funded by FRESpace*

Although it is a strange time and we all navigate through this new normal, we've had some great updates and great people this summer!

*Sam Pettit, Interpretive Ranger*

*We are sad to inform FRESpace members that former FRESpace board member and Blowhards coordinator Laurie Sanders passed away August 4, 2020. Our sympathy to his wife, Sjannah.*

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*Thank you for your support!*

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**We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.**

**Please mail application to:**

**FRESpace**

**8377 State Cabin Road**

**Edisto Island, SC 29438**

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