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The Ossabaw Island Foundation

305 Fahm Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401
912.233-5104
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www.ossabawisland.org

The Ossabaw Island Foundation Board of Trustees
invites you to a

**Pig Roast, Picnic and Art Auction
overlooking Ossabaw Sound**

Saturday, October 18, 2008

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Very casual dress

Part of the adventure is the journey,
please come and enjoy the day.

RSVP by Friday, October 10, 2008

\$150 per person

Transportation provided from Delegal Marina,
The Landings on Skidaway Island
Limited Space Available

See Page 2 for more information



Ossabaw Oracle

Revealing the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island

Vol. XIV No. 2

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Ossabaw Island Foundation

OssaBEST Arrives on Ossabaw!

Over two busy weeks in July and August, nearly 80 middle and high school students and teachers from Savannah-Chatham County Public School System spent two and a half days each on Ossabaw Island. Arriving at the island's North End dock in groups of 20, the study teams explored the island's ecosystems, captured digital photographs, collected data and ultimately created a working, on-line virtual field guide to Ossabaw.

Using digital cameras and GPS devices, the students worked with faculty and staff from Armstrong Atlantic State University (AASU) to examine the island's marshes, forests and beaches, testing water from a variety of aquatic ecosystems, retrieving data from groundwater sensors, and developing PowerPoint presentations to share their findings.

The innovative summer program was the first of three annual "Summer Institutes" held as part of OssaBEST, (Ossabaw Electronic Exploration for Students and Teachers). This unique three year program, funded through a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation, was designed to combine hands on field observation with state of the art computer technology for Chatham County public schools. The grant was awarded in 2007 to AASU's schools of Computer Science and Information Technology.

OssaBEST's program objective is to excite students about math and science and encourage them to pursue careers in computers and technology.

The unique Ossabaw Island experience not only provides students with access to the most recent technological developments, but provides youth and adults who have scant previous exposure to unspoiled environments the opportunity to spend two-and-a-half days on the island, on pristine beaches examining sea turtle nests, in old growth maritime forests teeming with wildlife, and sleeping in bunks in the Clubhouse.

See OssaBEST, p. 5



Take a Day Trip to Ossabaw

The Ossabaw Island Foundation is hosting another unforgettable day on Ossabaw Island.

Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve is a living laboratory for scientists, naturalists and educators, a studio for artists and a place of inspiration for writers and thinkers.

If you have ever wondered about Ossabaw or wanted to visit, we invite you to join us.

For those willing to venture by pontoon boat, buckboard and on foot, you will see the place where the arts and sciences meet history and nature.

When:

Saturday, November 1

- The boat departs promptly at 9:30 am and returns around 4 pm

Where:

Delegal Marina, The Landings on Skidaway Island

Cost:

\$50 per person for Friends of Ossabaw, or \$65 per person for Future Friends

- Reservations are required, as space is limited.
- Payment in full is required to confirm reservations.
- Cost includes round-trip boat transportation to Ossabaw Island and the full day tour.
- Cost does **not** include your sack lunch or bottled water / beverages.
- Due to the length of the tour, this program is not recommended for children.
- Because we will be riding along unpaved roads in a wooden buckboard, this tour is not recommended for those with hip, back or knee problems.
- This tour does **not** include a tour of the Torrey-West Estate, out of respect for privacy.

For more information or to reserve space on this tour, please contact:

Jim Bitler, Foundation On-Island Coordinator at 912.210.1613 or Elizabeth DuBose, Foundation Executive Director at 912.233.5104.

Save the Date!

Thursday, January 15, 2009

The Ossabaw Island Foundation Annual Meeting

Coastal Georgia Center, 305 Fahm Street

Come celebrate Sandy West's 96th birthday and kick off the Ossabaw Island Foundation's exciting new year.

Auction, continued from back cover

Enjoy live bluegrass, the beauty of Ossabaw Island, libations and a traditional southern “dinner on the grounds” served on the lawn of the Main House. Prepared by Lee Epting Catering of Athens, Georgia our meal features roast wild Ossabaw pig by longtime island caretaker Roger Parker.

This past summer, over 30 artists from around the southeast working in many creative disciplines spent several days on Ossabaw Island, some for the first time. The art auction will feature island-inspired works of these emerging artists, plus pieces by longtime favorite established artists who return each year to experience the magic of Ossabaw.

Proceeds from this year’s event support the Ossabaw Island Foundation and will allow us to purchase original art work from Mrs. West’s Ossabaw Island Project collection. From 1961–1982, the Ossabaw Island Project invited people of creative purpose in several disciplines from many states and nations to work and find inspiration on the island of Ossabaw.

Tickets are \$150 per person, payable to The Ossabaw Island Foundation, 305 Fahm Street, Savannah, Georgia 31401.

For the first time, tickets may be ordered online at www.ossabawisland.org.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available, which include tickets to the event.

Questions? Call Elizabeth DuBose: (912) 233-5104, or email elizabeth@ossabawisland.org.

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Spirit Walk

Feel rain on your face, smell the freshening air.
Cold wind rising, pulling and ruffling your hair.
The sky colors form an arch into the lake
and it speaks of a time we had to forsake.

Fish are still biting, so you cast out again,
then you hear a call, from your soul’s deepest plain.
The old one is calling you, and you listen.
Colors in the water sparkle and glisten.

The ancient one in you returning with joy...
the wild one you let run when you were a boy.
He feels the sleet biting into your quick grin
and you want to run with him through brae and fen.

He is the one who kept the way of the fang,
who knew how to sing until the mountains rang.
The one who remembers old spirits’ faces
when the streams and forests were sacred places.
Return to the forests, return to the wild.

To places that whispered when you were a child,
that told of brother wolves running in wild chases
in that long time before men became races.

Smell the sweet juniper and the Earth’s good loam.
Listen for the loon’s call where the moose still roam.
Run before the storm and run before the rain,
Run with the spirit of the old one again.

When you have found the place our souls remember,
go to the fire pit to find the last ember.
She is the dream maker, the mother of flames,
she listened when your ancestors spoke their names.

Bring her offerings of tinder and lighter,
old memories to ignite and burn brighter.
She is the dream maker, you ask her the way,
and you begin your spirit walk on that day.

*James Dalton Byrd
July 2007*

The Ossabaw Gift Shop

T-shirts feature Craig Rubadoux's Ossabaw animals on the front and a map of the Georgia Coast on back. Short or long sleeved, sage green shirt/dark green printing.

Books include *Evocations of an Island* hardcover book, by Jack Leigh, Alan Campbell and James Kilgo, as well as boxed note cards featuring four different images from the book, (8 cards total, with 2 cards each image). Also, Ann Foskey's *Images of America: Ossabaw Island*, and now, *The God of the Hinge, Sojourns in Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Elizabeth Pool and Eleanor West. We also offer prints of William Armstrong's painting of Bradley Beach.

- Please send ___ copy(ies) of *God of the Hinge* @ \$16.95 _____
- Please send ___ copy(ies) of *Evocations* @ \$29.95 _____
- Please send ___ copy(ies) of *Images of America* @ \$20 _____
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The Ossabaw Island Foundation
305 Fahm Street
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Changes, continued from Page 3

answer was simple: the armadillos eat their eggs and have decimated that population.

The changes that had taken place around the island, both in its geography and its wildlife were particularly stunning because of the length of time between my visits. On the other hand, in that same twenty-six years some things had not changed.

Great blue herons still rise out of the marshes with magisterial power. Legions of fiddler crabs still make that whispering sound when as they scurry across a stretch of sand. The deer still abound, looking stronger and healthier. The wind still makes that clattering noise in the palmettos. A pair of donkeys, mother and son, part of a dramatically reduced herd, hung out around the North End and showed up every morning to see how we were doing.

Instead of Musgrove, Sandy introduced us to her "beau" Paul Mitchell, a huge, hairy black pig that hung around the Main House. Along with other four footed admirers, he frequently waited below her window for words of endearment and food.

And sunsets, as seen from the little hump-backed bridge on the way to Cane Patch remain among the most beautiful I have ever known.



OssaBEST, continued from Page 1

As Georgia Power's Barrier Island Observatory evolves on Ossabaw Island, so too will OssaBEST. Future Summer Institutes on the island as well as "mainland-bound" students and teachers from across the state and around the country will be able to track atmospheric



Students compile data

conditions on Ossabaw and possibly correlate that data to sea turtle nesting activity here on the Georgia coast. Proposed video cameras placed strategically throughout the island will hopefully provide insight into life around alligator holes, bald eagle nesting behavior, endangered wood stork

courtship activity and sea turtle nest depredation, among other aspects of Ossabaw's wildlife.

Thanks to the efforts of the Ossabaw Education Alliance and support from Georgia Power and the Georgia Research Alliance, this innovative approach to sharing the island will benefit students and teachers who come to the island as well as those who are not able to experience Ossabaw first-hand.

--Jim Bitler, *Ossabaw Island Foundation's On-Island Coordinator*

Changes: My Return to Ossabaw

Antonia Hamilton: Ossabaw Island Project Alumna '80 and Genesis Project Alumna, '81

In late August, 2007 my husband, artist Carter Leidy, and I met On-Island Coordinator Jim Bitler at the state's Burnside Island dock to make the crossing to the island. Twenty six years earlier I had arrived ashore at this dock after leaving the island for the second time in eight months. In the fall of 1980 I had a seven week residency at the Ossabaw Island Project (OIP). I returned to the island in May 1981 for a five week residency at Genesis Project (GP) where I lived in the Tree House.

Back on the island after a 26 year absence, we were driven by Jim to the Clubhouse where we would stay. The last time I was there, Sandy West and I sat on the porch steps chatting with the pig, Musgrove.

The morning after arriving for my latest visit, before Carter set out painting, Jim turned up for what I called "The Talk." He reviewed the important regulations to follow during our stay and also mentioned snakes—topics both Al Bradford (OIP director) and Michael Billa (Genesis director) had covered in their respective welcomes to OIP and Genesis nearly three decades earlier. Some things don't change.

On our second morning back on Ossabaw, I walked south under the familiar canopy of live oaks hung with Spanish moss. When I turned into Middle Place everything changed. That site has not been occupied since Genesis closed in 1983.

My first impression was of how small the central field looked. Pig weed, dog fennel, other assorted weedy growths had simply reclaimed their territory. The huge live oak still loomed over the Cook Shack, or more precisely what was left of it: chunks of appliances and sections of walls toppled and half hidden in the grasses growing around and over them.

Mount Middle Place, the historic sawdust pile that may still represent the highest point on the island, had been the site of many evening gatherings to watch the sun slide down the western sky behind the marsh. Now it appeared reduced, its outlines partially obscured by opportunistic trees and weeds.

The Tree House, when I found it in the forest, was less than half there. The front half was missing. Its broken

back half was still stubbornly clinging to the tree that had held it when it was whole. I realized that my memories of being there had persisted as vibrantly and stubbornly as the natural forces that had taken over the place. Once I got over the effect of Nature having its way, I felt no particular sadness about the state of the place. It was impossible not to admire the stubborn ability of the natural world to persist on its own terms, while many of the marks made by human habitation require maintenance if they are not to fall down or apart.

We drove to South Beach one morning and parked at the shelter. The path I remembered from there to the beach had been lost to a patch of marshy growth. Following Jim's suggestion, Carter found a path which we followed south until we could walk out on the sand. The beach was flat and wide and welcoming. The Ghost Trees were still where I remembered them. However, the slough seemed wider and running with a force I did not recall. I also thought its course had shifted farther south and more parallel to the ocean than before. The weight of tidal water rising in it tore off pieces of sandy bank with each swell and retreat. Change was occurring as we stood there.

A few days later when we visited Sandy West, I reported my astonishment at the changes we had been observing. She reminded us that Nature, not man, had dictated those changes. She was rightfully proud of the fact that, in helping to assure that the State of Georgia would be a responsible owner and steward of Ossabaw, she had also assured that Nature alone would leave its mark on the island.

As with all truths, there was bound to be an exception. Hiking out past the tabbies into the woods toward Cane Patch I saw what looked like an armadillo to the side of the path, though I had never heard of armadillos on Ossabaw. Jim Bitler confirmed that it was indeed an armadillo. Apparently they turned up on the island around 1990, though no one knows how. He used the plural in speaking of the first colonists in this clan because either a pair or a pregnant female arrived and proceeded to make themselves at home. Clearly they did not swim. If they did arrive by boat, who brought them? Why?

The story does not end there. Just before we left Ossabaw, I mentioned to Jim that I had missed seeing wild turkeys, among my favorites from years ago. The

Last summer the Ossabaw Island Foundation sent a survey form to alumni of the Ossabaw Island Project and Genesis Project, asking for their reflections about Ossabaw.

We hope we continue to hear from you.

Email elizabeth@ossabawisland.com



Toni Hamilton in front of Tree House

Friends of Ossabaw May - August, 2008

Friends \$20-\$99

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Artist Carter Leidy
painting on Ossabaw Island

Visiting Artists Program Embraces Winter on Ossabaw

For the past several summers, painters, photographers, wood turners, and other visual artists and fine craftspeople have escaped to Ossabaw Island for short sabbaticals and creative inspiration, courtesy of the Ossabaw Island Foundation's Visiting Artist Program. Artists come to the island solo, in pairs or larger groups, drawing inspiration from the beaches, the wildlife, the history of Ossabaw.

Beginning in 2009, the Visiting Artists Program is expanding its schedule, shifting its focus to the winter months.

From December, January, February subject to availability, artists are invited to experience Ossabaw Island in a whole new wintry way--its exquisite light, clear night skies, and intricate shadows through leafless branches.

Make it a day trip, stay one night or several. Artists will be housed in the 1890's era Club House or the recently completed Boarding House. On-island coordinator Jim Bitler will provide an overview of Ossabaw's natural and built environment, as well as transportation around the island.

In return for your adventure on Ossabaw Island, we ask that you donate at least one finished piece of Ossabaw-inspired art (framed if applicable) to the Art Auction held during the annual Pig Roast in October. The proceeds of the auction benefit the Torrey-West House Fund.

A limited number of Visiting Artist Program spaces will occur in the summer to accommodate artists with summer flexibility.

Contact On-Island Coordinator Jim Bitler 912-210-1613 or jim@ossabawisland.org to schedule your wintertime inspiration!