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Community Engagement Options

The following are free, state-sponsored events and services are provided by the Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve and Georgia DNR staff for community residences and HOA board members.

Wildlife Planning – Community Coexisting safely with wildlife in a community setting can be challenging, but we're here to help. We work with community leaders to develop personalized, science-based plans to reduce wildlife conflicts. By assessing your community's unique features, we create strategies tailored to your goals. While we specialize in reptiles, we have experience working with a variety of wildlife and can help with all of your wildlife needs.

Wildlife Planning – Resident Wildlife in your backyard can be both exciting and a little nerve-racking. Our residential wildlife planning helps homeowners attract desired wildlife while safely deterring others. We visit your home to create a personalized, science-based plan tailored to your specific wildlife goals.

Customized Education Materials – Sometimes, the biggest hurdle to creating a community that can safely coexist with wildlife is awareness and knowledge. That's why we offer customized education materials that are tailored to your specific needs. We can help create site-specific brochures, flyers, signage, stickers, car magnets, and more to help create a more informed and wildlife-conscious community. This can help mitigate wildlife conflict, allowing humans and wildlife to safely and peacefully coexist.

Botany Walk– Join us for a guided plant walk to explore the local flora and learn about the uses and unique characteristics of different plants. This hands-on experience offers insight into the natural world right in your own community. The walk is outdoors and weather-dependent, so participants should be prepared for heat or buggy conditions.

Bird Nerds Unite!- Learn about backyard birds, how to attract them, and ways to identify them. Finish up the fun talk with a bird walk around the community to spot some birding hotspots.

Hurricane and Resilience- This interactive talk presents great information for community members about storm prep, hurricane data, and why nature based solutions can help prevent dangerous situations for your community.

Rain Gardens- This training goes into the importance of water conservation, stormwater management, and ways to incorporate both in beautiful landscaping practices that not only can increase your property value but also increase your pollinator and wildlife habitat for your yard.

Rain Barrel Workshop- This community-focused educational class teaches residents how to harvest rainwater, reduce stormwater runoff, and can build their own functional collection system to take home.

Landscaping for Wildlife- This educational class teaches people how to design and manage yards, gardens, or larger properties to attract and support local animals like birds, butterflies, and bees. These sessions focus on using native plants, adding water features, creating natural shelters, and zone planting to resist pests and overbrowsing by deer and rabbits.

Additional programs are available for community residents through our UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant Partners. Except where stated, \$15 fee paid by individual participants, not HOA. Minimum group size and seasonal availability may apply.

Wildlife First Aid – This training course focuses on preventing and responding to wildlife-related injuries. You'll learn about the risks and statistics behind incidents like alligator encounters and snake bites, as well as how to safely treat stings, bites, and other wildlife injuries. The course provides practical guidance for staying safe while interacting with or managing wildlife.

Alligator Program– The American alligator is Georgia's largest reptile, but coexistence is not only possible, but it's essential. In this engaging presentation-style program, you'll learn about alligator biology, safety tips for living near them, and the important conservation and research efforts happening right here in Georgia. The experience wraps up with a special meet-and-greet with one of our alligator ambassadors.

Snakes of Georgia – Do you know your Georgia snakes? In this interactive, presentation-style program, you'll learn how to identify venomous and non-venomous species using our live ambassador animals for an up-close look at some of our native snakes. Along the way, we'll explore unique behaviors, bust common snake myths, and share some fascinating snake facts.

Know Your Venomous Snakes - This presentation-style program features live venomous snakes to teach about the 6 venomous snake species that can be found in Georgia. You'll learn how to recognize their behaviors, stay safe in snake-prone areas, prevent snake bites, and what to do if

a person or pet is bitten. The Coastal Ecology Lab brings years of hands-on experience and certified safe-handling expertise to this important and informative program.

Invasive Reptile Pets - Reptiles are increasingly popular pets, but irresponsible ownership can create serious ecological problems. In this presentation-style program, you'll meet several species that began as pets and have since become invasive in Georgia and Florida. We'll discuss what makes a species invasive, the importance of responsible pet ownership, and how you can help protect native wildlife.

Live Animal Program – Get up close with our reptile ambassadors in this hands-on educational experience. Using live animals, we explore the unique features, behaviors, and adaptations of a variety of reptile species. You'll also learn about the important reptile research and conservation work we're conducting here in South Georgia.

Terrestrial Invertebrates – Invertebrates are everywhere, yet they're often overlooked. In this engaging program, we take a closer look at the many types of invertebrates, their incredible adaptations, and the vital roles they play in our ecosystems. You'll leave with a new appreciation for the small creatures that make a big impact.

Nature Scavenger Hunt – Looking for a fun, outdoorsy activity with friends or family? Join our nature scavenger hunt, where we create a customized, nature-based adventure in your community for you to explore and compete in. Along the way, you'll discover fascinating facts about local wildlife and natural resources. This outdoor activity is weather-dependent and may involve hot or buggy conditions, so come prepared for an adventure!

Alligator Adventure – Join us on a field trip to your local area to observe alligators, learn about their behavior, and explore the research we conduct. We'll share the best places and times to safely spot alligators, with an optional VIP experience that lets you participate in an alligator capture and help collect real research data. You can even sponsor a satellite tag and track your alligator from your phone! This outdoor adventure is weather-dependent and may involve hot or buggy conditions.

Aquatic Turtle Trapping – Turtles can be seen in every fresh body of water here in Georgia, but it is often difficult to identify them from afar. In this hands-on field program, we set hoop traps to safely capture, identify, and mark aquatic turtles. It's a great way for turtle enthusiasts and local residents alike to learn which species live in their own ponds. This outdoor program is weather-dependent and may involve hot or buggy conditions.

We can also customize the following programs for you (fees may vary depending on customization).

- **Adult Camp** – Miss summer camp but wish it were designed for adults? Our new multi-day adult camp offers nature-based fun, including arts and crafts, hands-on activities, and campfires with s'mores. You and your group can choose from a variety of

activities to create a personalized experience. Camps take place at either Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Fargo, GA, or Melon Bluff Nature Center in Midway, GA.

- **Birthday Party** – Does your child (or adult friend) like reptiles? Make their next birthday unforgettable with our birthday party package, featuring live reptile ambassadors and a short, engaging program about the animals. Guests will have the chance to touch the animals, and the birthday guest of honor will get a special photo with the animal of their choice.
- **Wildlife Social** – Looking to add a unique twist to your next big event or conference? Consider having us bring live reptiles for an interactive experience, either at a stationary table or roaming through your crowd. Guests will be able to touch and ask questions about any of the animals we have. There is also the option to add an evening lecture to your event if you and your guests are interested in learning more about a specific topic.